THE HULSEAN LECTURES

LIBRARY OF PRINCETON
JAN 26 1900
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

BR 45 .H84 1891
Lyttelton, A. T. 1852-1903.
The place of miracles in
religion

THE PLACE

OF

MIRACLES IN RELIGION

THE PLACE

OF

MIRACLES IN RELIGION

THE HULSEAN LECTURES FOR 1891

BY THE

RIGHT REV. THE HON. A. T. LYTTELTON, D.D.

BISHOP OF SOUTHAMPTON

LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET

1899

Oxford
HORACE HART, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

PREFACE

THE following lectures were in substance delivered in 1891 as the Hulsean Lectures for that year. I have withheld them from publication in the hope that I might be able to expand them, so as to make them more worthy of the subject, of which they give little more than a sketch. The pressure of other duties has made this impossible, and I have had to content myself with rewriting a considerable part of the book and making a few necessary additions and corrections. The lectures are now offered as a very slight contribution to the history of Christian Evidence, a subject which deserves fuller treatment than, so far as my knowledge extends, it has yet received.

A. S.

THE CASTLE HOUSE, PETERSFIELD,
March 18, 1899.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. MIRACLES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT . .	1–37
NOTE ON THE JEWISH APOCRYPHAL BOOKS	38–41
II. MIRACLES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT . .	42–80
III. MIRACLES IN THE EARLY CHURCH . .	81–118
IV. MIRACLES IN RELATION TO MODERN THOUGHT	119–150

THE PLACE OF MIRACLES IN RELIGION

I

Miracles in the Old Testament

The object of these lectures is mainly historical. Much has been written on the metaphysical and scientific questions connected with miracles, and on the credibility and critical character of the books which record them, and I do not propose to go over again this well-trodden ground except at the conclusion of this special investigation, when I shall attempt to point out its bearings on the whole controversy. Apart from these topics, there is a question which is often overlooked or treated only incidentally, and which is important enough to demand separate and detailed consideration. What place, as a matter of fact, did the Biblical miracles take

in the religious consciousness of those who stood nearest to them? In attempting to answer this question we shall have to consider two main topics; first, the manner in which the miracles recorded in the Bible are said to have occurred, their number and their distribution over the whole period covered by the history; and in the second place, the manner in which they were regarded and appealed to by the Jews and the early Christians. This second topic is the chief object of our investigation, but the first inquiry is necessary, though subordinate, to it. For we cannot appreciate the manner in which certain phenomena are regarded, till we know something of the mode of their occurrence, the relation in which they stand to other historical phenomena. Before realizing the place of miracles in religion, we must realize their place in the history on which the Christian religion is based. If miraculous phenomena were few and insignificant, little could be inferred from the infrequency or the incidental character of the references to them; but if they are said to have occurred frequently, and on a vast and striking scale, their subordinate place, as miracles, in the religious consciousness of the Jews and the early Christians has an obviously

important bearing on the whole subject of Christian evidences. For though the inquiry is chiefly historical, it has a dogmatic and speculative aspect. The place which miracles occupied in the religious consciousness of those among whom they were wrought, and of those who came immediately after them, is surely the place they were intended to occupy, and if later Christian thought has taken a different view of miracles from that of earlier ages the question arises whether it would not be well for us to return to the more primitive position. To that question the last lecture will be mainly devoted.

The inquiry then is chiefly historical; but before entering upon it there are certain preliminary definitions and discussions which must be undertaken. First we must make clear the sense in which the word miracle is here employed. A strictly logical definition would lead us into philosophical discussions which are alien to our present purpose. It is enough to say in general terms that the word will here be used in the sense of occasional visible acts of power, beyond human experience to account for or human faculties to accomplish, though sometimes wrought through human agency; and these acts are impressed with the character of righteous-

ness, and are therefore in accordance with the general lines of God's moral government of the world. There are of course, besides the definition, several important preliminary questions which would have to be discussed in any complete *rationale* of miracles: but as the subject is here limited we may assume them and pass them by. Thus we may assume the general historical accuracy of the Scriptural records; in other words, we assume that the events described really occurred, although they were miraculous[1]. Further, we may assume that, for the most part, they were miraculous. This is of course a debateable point. It is often urged that many, some would say most, of the events usually considered as miraculous were really normal phenomena, explicable by laws which are now known, though at that time unknown. It is urged, again, that some of the miraculous

[1] It might be said that I am here begging the whole question, in assuming the authenticity of the miraculous records. Criticism, in the opinion of many, has proved that all these stories of miracles are the growth of later ages, and has therefore cut away the ground on which my investigation rests. This is not so. Criticism, whatever it has proved, has not proved that the Jews did not believe in the miraculous narratives of their own sacred books, and if they believed them I am entitled to ask, What place did their belief occupy in their religious consciousness? That, and not the authenticity of the records, is the subject of this investigation.

incidents were not intended to be taken as historical facts, but were poetical embellishments of the narrative, and are to be understood metaphorically or symbolically. Now it seems clear that both these positions may, to some extent, be accepted by the firmest believer in the inspiration of the Bible and in the direct intervention of God in human affairs, for they are really matters of interpretation. They do not affect the veracity or the good faith of the narrator, but they are questions as to what he actually meant to narrate. To take the second point first. It has usually been held, for instance, that an actual historical event is narrated in the passage which speaks of the sun standing still during Joshua's victory at Beth-horon[1]. But a study of the form in which the description is cast shows clearly, as I cannot but think, that it is a fragment of poetry inserted in the narrative[2], and is therefore no more intended to be taken as literal history than such passages as 'the stars in their courses fought against Sisera[3],' or 'the mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like young sheep[4].' But if so, we are

[1] Joshua x. 12, 13.
[2] For similar fragments see Num. xxi. 17, 18, 27–30.
[3] Judges v. 20. [4] Ps. cxiv. 4.

justified in passing over the alleged miracle, on the ground, not that it is in itself more incredible than others, or that miracles do not occur, but that in this particular instance no miracle is intended by the narrator. There may, of course, be other cases to which the same explanation applies; it is a question of interpretation, and each case must be decided on its own merits. Or, to go back to the first of the two positions referred to, it may be true that several incidents, which to the contemporary witnesses and to the Old Testament writers seemed to be miraculous, can now be explained by reference to known causes. Here also we have a question of interpretation, not however this time of the intention of the narrator, but of the actual fact which he narrates. We cast no doubt on the good faith of the writer of Exodus if, for example, we account for the passage of the Red Sea by normal causes: the fact remains the same though we interpret it differently [1].

[1] I may here anticipate somewhat the course of my argument to meet a difficulty which will occur to some at this point. It may be said that though the good faith of the narrator is not questioned, the view here taken denies implicitly the inspiration of passages in which the crossing of the Red Sea is claimed as a *miraculous* proof of God's special favour to Israel. I shall try to show that though constantly referred to as a proof of God's favour, its *miraculous* character is not appealed to. Whether the Psalmists,

It seems clear, however, that after all such deductions have been made, there remains in the Old Testament a considerable number of miracles in the strictest sense of the word. Criticism may fairly resolve some of the narratives into poetry, rationalism may rightly assign causes for some events which were formerly inexplicable; but after all there is left a large element of the truly miraculous in the Old Testament history. To some minds this is a conclusive proof that the Old Testament is historically untrustworthy: but to discuss the ground on which this conclusion rests, the antecedent incredibility of miracles, is not within the scope of our present subject. I assume, therefore, that miracles actually occurred, and that for the most part those that are regarded as miracles by the writers really were miracles; that is, they were events beyond any power within our normal experience to accomplish.

There remains to be considered a distinction which is of vital importance to our subject, and especially to that of this first lecture, the distinction, namely, between miraculous events, as

for instance, believed it to be a miracle or not, is immaterial, since they do not use it as a miracle, i. e. as a supernatural evidence of the Divine Presence.

I have defined them, and the supernatural [1] generally. It is of the essence of true religion to have a firm belief in the constant presence and agency of God, to see His Hand in all that happens in the world, to trace the fulfilment of His purposes in the course of history, the action of His love and providence in the movements of external nature. This sense of the Divine government of the world is often expressed in language which seems to ignore any secondary causes whatever, and to contemplate God as the sole and immediate cause of all mundane events. I am not now concerned with the accuracy or inaccuracy of such language; I only wish to mark the distinction between this conception of Divine action and that involved in miracles. Belief in a supernatural Providence—as for want of a better term I must call it—is not at all identical with a belief in miracles. A constantly recurring miracle, or a standing miracle, is, to speak strictly, a contradiction in terms; but the Divine agency, as the religious mind conceives of it, is continuous. When our Lord declared 'My Father worketh even until now[2],' He

[1] I use the word 'supernatural' as a convenient expression for what is meant, though I am fully conscious of its vague and even misleading character.

[2] John v. 17.

would not be understood by any thoughtful mind to mean that there had been a ceaseless succession of miracles since the creation, for if ceaseless they would not be miraculous, but that God's power has been continuously put forth to sustain the universe which it was once put forth to create. This belief in God's continuous government of the world is what I mean by belief in the supernatural generally, and it is very important to keep it distinct from belief in the miraculous. For the supernatural, in this sense, neither affords the religious evidence which miracles afford to those who believe in them, nor interposes the obstacle to faith which miracles put in the way of those who disbelieve them. The conviction that God constantly acts upon the course of events, that He plans and directs and works whatever happens, is itself religion, but it is not a proof of religion or of revelation. And on the other hand it does not constitute a difficulty in religion. It contradicts no scientific facts; it is consistent with every detail of modern discoveries. The ground on which a sceptic urges that the necessity of believing in the occurrence of certain miracles is to him an argument against Christianity is that miracles go counter to experience; however

this may be, the same could not be said of the belief in God's continuous government of the world, for the very reason that it is continuous and normal, and therefore part of our experience, as the religious mind interprets it.

But in spite of this obvious distinction between a belief in the general action of Divine providence and a belief in miracles, the two are very easily confused. For a belief in the direct action of God leads naturally to language which gives the impression of the frequent occurrence of miraculous events: the whole atmosphere of history becomes charged with the supernatural, and every incident seems, in the narrating, to be a special miracle. This confusion is particularly likely to occur in studying the history of the Jewish race, as recorded in the Old Testament. For it may be confidently asserted that no race has had such a constant sense of God's presence and action as the Hebrew race. The Old Testament is the most intensely supernatural book in all literature, or more accurately, the book which is most indifferent to the distinction between the natural and the supernatural[1]. From

[1] Cf. Coleridge, who speaks of "the habit, universal with the Hebrew doctors, of referring all excellent or extraordinary things to the great First Cause, without mention of the proximate and

beginning to end everything is ascribed to the direct interposition of Divine providence in the affairs of the chosen people. The whole narrative of the Creation, ignoring as it does all secondary causes, is intended to concentrate the mind on the immediate creative energy of the Almighty. And when in later times prophet or psalmist or historian looked back to the beginning of things, or around him at the course of the external world, it was still God and God alone that he saw behind the transparent veils of time and space[1]. 'I am the Lord, that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth; who is with Me[2]?' In such utterances as this there is clearly nothing inconsistent with the strictest scientific view of nature and natural laws, nothing logically involving a belief in

instrumental causes—a striking illustration of which may be obtained by comparing the narratives of the same events in the Psalms and in the historical books . . . *the distinction of the providential and the miraculous* did not enter into their forms of thinking—at all events not into their mode of conveying their thoughts." *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit,* Letter II, quoted by Sayce, *Higher Criticism.* Preface to 3rd edition.

[1] 'Omnia quae naturaliter fiunt Deus facere dicitur qui naturam et facit.' Grotius in Jonah iv. 7, quoted in *Church Quarterly Rev.* xvii. 336.

[2] Isa. xliv. 24.

miraculous interposition. The Jewish language might be used by a student of nature who denied any interference with the laws of the universe, any interruption or suspension of their unvarying sequence.

The same tendency is shown in the Jewish history, whether the events to be recorded are battles or legislation or measures of administration. The plans of generals like Moses and Joshua, Gideon, Barak, and David, are ascribed to the direct inspiration of the Lord. If, for instance, we take into account the constant characteristics of the Jewish mind, it is impossible to say whether the directions as to the capture of Ai were conceived by the historian as actually given to Joshua by the voice of God, or as put into the mind of the chosen leader in a manner which a less religious writer would have ascribed to the instinct of military skill. And just as the plan of battle came from God, so the results of the battles, the victories of the chosen race, are likewise ascribed to the direct interposition of the Almighty. 'The Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand[1]'; 'He smote many nations, and slew mighty kings; Sihon king of the Amorites, and

[1] Joshua xxi. 44.

Og king of Bashan [1].' It is not necessary, from these and similar expressions, to infer that the Canaanites were conquered by visible and miraculous acts of Divine power; indeed, we know from the history that, except in a few specified cases, the enemies of the Israelites were defeated by apparently natural means; behind which, however, the historian and the psalmist saw the Hand of God, as he saw It behind the progress of the seasons and the gradual formation of the universe. Nor, again, are we compelled to believe that, when the elaborate system of the ceremonial law is introduced by the words 'the Lord said unto Moses,' any actually spoken words are intended, or any transaction which can strictly be called miraculous. Moses was an inspired lawgiver, just as Joshua and Gideon were inspired leaders in war; but the mode of inspiration, the means by which the Divine providence put into their minds to plan battles and to frame laws in accordance with His purposes—this is hidden from us. The same is true of the prophets. The visions and messages which they saw and heard were, as Origen long ago taught [2], seen and heard spiritually. There was no visible

[1] Ps. cxxxv. 10, 11.

[2] *C. Celsum*, i. 48, cf. 66.

opening of the heavens, or audible voice, or tangible and material roll of a book, or coal from the altar, in the wonderful visions from which the prophets drew their inspiration. The whole is spiritual, subjective, as we should now say, though none the less real. When the historian tells us that 'the word of the Lord came' to a prophet, it is doubtful, indeed, whether he conceived it as an audible word or as a secret inspiration[1]: but it is surely not very important. Whether miracles be regarded as proofs of a revelation, or as a reason for rejecting it, there is no ground for treating the mode of inspiration, in such cases as these, as miraculous; though the phrase used is undoubtedly an indication of the overpowering Jewish consciousness of God's immediate agency. It may be said that we thus place Israel merely on a level with other nations, and reduce the sacred history to one instance among many of the general providence of God. No doubt many modern students of the Bible regard it in this way, but the view here taken by no means forces us to do so. In the first place, we

[1] Cf. Sanday's *Bampton Lectures*, p. 146: 'We are not called upon to formulate a theory, for which the data are perhaps insufficient, as to the exact mode in which God conveyed His will to the prophets.'

have to remember that, though much that is at first sight miraculous may be otherwise explained, there remains a large element of miracle in the Jewish history which, to any one who accepts it, distinguishes that history from other national records. In the second place, the peculiar character of the Divine dealings with Israel is not shown only or even chiefly in those incidents which we call miracles, but in the whole course of the history, and in the religious consciousness of the race. That Israel was 'a peculiar people,' 'chosen' by the Lord 'for His peculiar treasure[1],' is proved by the purpose impressed upon the events of Jewish history, by the circumstances which gradually separated them from other kindred races, by the destiny for which they were reserved, and above all by the unique character of their religious faith. We know that the Jews were the chosen race, not because wonders occurred during the course of their history, but because they were, as a matter of fact, singled out from other nations, trained and prepared for a great purpose, which was realized with ever-increasing clearness as the centuries passed, and fortified by a unique apprehension, which went 'from

[1] Ps. cxxxv. 4.

strength to strength' as their experience grew of the true nature and character of God. Whether, in short, we consider the inspiration or the history of Israel, we are justified in regarding them as 'a peculiar people.' 'He hath not dealt so with any nation: neither have the heathen knowledge of His laws[1].' But direct and providential and peculiar as was the religious experience of the Jews, there is nothing in the record to show that the selection or the guidance or the inspiration was, as a rule, accomplished by means strictly speaking miraculous.

I have dwelt on this distinction, which when stated may seem no doubt obvious enough, partly because it is nevertheless often overlooked, but chiefly because of its bearing on our main subject. For the misconception of the Jewish mode of thought has led to the common view that the Old Testament is from beginning to end a miraculous history, and that to the Jew miracle constituted almost the whole of religion. What I have called the general atmosphere of the supernatural has produced an impression of continual miracles. From such an impression it is easy to go a step further and assume that

[1] Ps. cxlvii. 20.

these miraculous events occurred without any purpose or plan, and thus the Old Testament becomes to many readers a record full of miracles scattered, in an aimless and perplexing way, over the whole course of Jewish history. From this point a mind imbued with modern modes of thought passes rapidly to the conclusion that this series of purposeless wonders is due to the mythopoeic tendencies which were no less, or even more strongly marked in the Jewish than in other early religions. But a more accurate study of the Old Testament record will show the fallacy of this view. God is everywhere present in the history of Israel; but miracles are strikingly rare. The mythopoeic tendency offers a very tempting explanation of what are assumed to be the facts; the real objection to it, from a purely critical point of view, is that, if it existed, it acted so seldom and so fitfully.

Before proceeding to examine the mode in which miracles occurred in Old Testament times, it should be noticed that the distinction here drawn, though to us important because of the use which modern criticism and modern apology have alike made of miracles, did not, so far as we can judge, occur to the Jewish

mind, at least during the period covered by the canonical writings of the Old Testament [1]. We shall see how indiscriminately the writers class what we should call miracles with events in which we discern only the normal working of natural forces. At the most the Hebrew historian or prophet regarded miracles as only the emergence into sensible experience of that Divine force which was all along, though invisibly, controlling the course of nature. Here and there it comes to the surface in some especially striking display, but its energy is only apparently, not really intermittent. This makes it very difficult for us, with our wholly modern ideas of natural law and uniformity, to understand the Old Testament treatment of miracles. The Hebrew had, to say the least, a very defective conception of natural law, and all events alike, miraculous and normal, were to him the works of God; and therefore, except in the comparatively rare cases of 'signs' given for a special purpose, he did not pause to inquire whether they were exceptional or not. Thus our inquiry is based on assumptions which the Jew did not make, and indeed could

[1] To the Apocryphal books, which contain the germs different conception of nature, I shall refer later.

not have understood; we are examining into the occurrence of a class of phenomena which we are compelled to distinguish from other phenomena, but which he could not distinguish. This makes it legitimate and even necessary for us, though we grant the perfect good faith of the narrators, to criticize and in some cases to rationalize their apparently miraculous narratives, and to ascribe them to normal causes. The question had no interest to the Jew, and therefore he made no effort to explain what we cannot help explaining by reference to the ordinary forces of nature. But, as I have already said, it seems clear that such explanations will not cover all the alleged Old Testament miracles, and it is in consequence necessary to point out, in a brief summary, what are the actual incidents which must be recognized as miracles.

They are, as has often been pointed out, mostly included in two great groups, and apart from these groups there are remarkably few certainly miraculous incidents. The inquiry into the historical miracles of the Old Testament must begin where Bible history begins, with the Call of Abraham. Before that event, even if any miracles in the strict sense are included in what have been aptly called 'the

prehistoric traditions[1]' of the early part of Genesis, it is, to say the least, very doubtful whether we are intended to take them as literal fact. But though history begins with Abraham, miracles do not. If we leave aside, for reasons already discussed, visions and messages and indications of God's direct guidance and inspiration, we find no miracle recorded in the Bible till we come to the time of Moses[2], and to that momentous epoch in the life of the chosen race when God revealed Himself to Israel by a new Name, and, by the hand of His appointed messenger Moses, delivered them from their Egyptian bondage. The incidents connected with the Exodus, including those of the wilderness and the conquest of Canaan, form the first great group of miracles. The other is of course the remarkable series of wonders that centre round the great prophetical figures of Elijah and Elisha. Apart from these two groups a

[1] Bishop Ellicott in his Charge, 1891.

[2] This must be, of course, to some extent a matter of opinion, depending on the acceptance of the principles already discussed. Many, for example, will interpret such an incident as the multiplication of Jacob's flocks as miraculous; others will see in it only a sign of God's favour to the Patriarch, acting in no abnormal or miraculous manner. So with other incidents in the prae-Mosaic period; but on any theory they must be acknowledged to be remarkably few.

few scattered miracles occur, but of these we need only now notice one class, namely, those 'signs,' as they are specially called, which were granted in answer to direct petitions. Such were the two signs given to Moses to convince him and his people of the reality of his mission, the sign of the dew on Gideon's fleece, the sign of Hezekiah's dial. Now these incidents, which are by no means numerous, seem in themselves to be of a different character from most of the Biblical miracles, and the circumstances of their occurrence, and still more the manner in which they are referred to, place them in a class apart. They are, I believe, to be regarded as condescensions to human faithlessness and weakness, rather than as instances of God's normal method of revelation. We remember how strongly our Lord rebuked the similar demands made upon Him: His attitude towards the temper which craved for a visible sign of God's presence and favour is illustrated by the rarity of such signs in the Old Testament, and by the undefinable but surely unmistakeable tone of something derogatory to God and man with which they are mentioned. Such signs imply faithlessness; they are rarely asked for, and reluctantly granted. They are markedly the

exception and not the rule among the miracles of the Old Testament [1].

In the two great groups referred to, then, are chiefly contained the facts with which our inquiry has to deal. Apart from them, some twenty or thirty miraculous events, in the strict sense of the term, lie scattered over a period of 1,500 years. So far, then, from the Old Testament being an unbroken record of marvels, we see that we were justified in saying at the outset that miracles in the Old Testament are strikingly rare. Further, a scrutiny of the conditions under which they occurred will guide us to some comprehension of their plan, the purpose for which they were wrought or sanc-

[1] 'Isaiah's offer of a sign [to Ahaz] was one which the prophets of Israel used to make when some crisis demanded the immediate acceptance of their word by men, and men were more than usually hard to convince—a miracle such as the thunder that Samuel called out of a clear sky to impress Israel with God's opinion of their folly in asking for a king (1 Sam. xii. 17); or as the rending of the altar which the man of God brought to pass to convict the sullen Jeroboam (1 Kings xiii. 3); or as the regress of the shadow on the sun-dial, which Isaiah himself gave in assurance of recovery to the sick Hezekiah (Isa. xxxviii.) Such signs are offered only to weak or prejudiced persons. The most real faith, as Isaiah himself tells us, is unforced, the purest natures those which need no signs and wonders.' G. A. Smith, *Isaiah*, vol. i. p. 113. For the essential inferiority of signs of this sort to spiritual and religious evidences, cf. Deut. xiii. 1–5, and the discussion of the passage in Westcott, *Gospel of Life*, p. 212.

tioned. Contrary to a very common opinion, miracles in the Old Testament seem to be connected, not specially with the revelation of Divine truths, of which the great Hebrew prophets were the inspired channels, but with the great epochs of the national existence. The point can perhaps be best illustrated by quoting a statement of the opposite view of miracles to that here taken. Miracles, wrote J. H. Newman seventy years ago [1], are 'vouchers for the truth of a message which' the Jewish teachers 'deliver,' their 'express purpose is to confirm the natural evidence of one God,' they were 'wrought for the most part on a grand scale, in the face of the world, to supply whole nations with evidence concerning the Deity,' and the plagues of Egypt 'were directed against the prevalent superstitions of that country.' Now, if this view of miracles is true at all, it is only true in a very partial and subsidiary manner. Newman ignores what seems to have been the immediate object, or at least occasion, of these events, and concentrates his attention on a secondary and almost incidental result of their occurrence. And even of this he gives an exaggerated account. If the miracles of the

[1] *Essays on Biblical and on Ecclesiastical Miracles*, pp. 19, 23, 25.

Exodus were designed to convince 'whole nations' of the errors of their popular faiths, and to reveal to them the truths of the Divine Nature, it must be confessed that they signally failed in their object. So far as the record goes no change was wrought in the religion of Egypt or of the surrounding nations by any of the Old Testament miracles, and, with certain exceptions, it cannot be said that even among the Israelites themselves, either their object or their result was to provide proofs of revelation. In what way, as a matter of fact, were the belief in the unity of God, and in His purposes for Israel, the conviction of sin and the need of forgiveness, the realization of Divine holiness and justice, all the truths in short which constituted the religion of the Old Testament, in what way were these impressed upon the minds of the chosen people? Taking the history as it stands, we find that they learnt it from a succession of teachers whom they believed to be prophets inspired by God—from Abraham and Moses, Samuel and David, Hosea and Amos, Isaiah and Jeremiah, till the Old Testament reaches its close in Malachi. Now in all this long line of teachers and lawgivers, can it be truly said that any relied chiefly on

miracles to attest the truth of his message[1]? If we leave Moses, Elijah, and Elisha aside for the present, what miraculous attestation of prophetic teaching remains? One or two signs appealed to by Samuel, a remarkable group of wonders in the life of Daniel, and two undoubted miracles connected with the work and teaching of Isaiah. But, striking though these are, it cannot be said that the teaching of prophets depended for its proof on such miraculous incidents. Isaiah, for instance, had taught, without appeal to any miraculous confirmation of his utterances, for years before the truth of one of his messages was proved by the destruction of Sennacherib's army, and of another by the sign of Hezekiah's dial. Like Hosea and Amos, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Isaiah proclaimed his message, his revelation of the character and the will of God, independently of any visible signs and wonders.

[1] We may carry the question still further if, as is surely right, we regard the Baptist as a prophet, though 'more than a prophet' of the old dispensation. The complete absence of any claim to miraculous power in the Baptist's history, and the acquiescence of the people in that absence are very significant facts. 'Whole structures of popular objections fall before a simple statement like that in which the Evangelist undesignedly contrasts the ministry of the Baptist with the ministry of Christ. "John indeed did no sign" (John x. 41).' Westcott, *Gospel of Life*, p. 225.

Newman's account of miracles applies to those of Elijah and Elisha more than to any other of the miracles of the Old Testament. Of the scene on Mount Carmel[1] it might perhaps not untruly be said that it was a miracle 'wrought on a grand scale to supply a whole nation with evidence concerning the Deity'; though here again, in the most favourable connexion for Newman's purpose, we are conscious of the intrusion of a purely modern conception which does not harmonize with the ancient record. It was hardly 'evidence concerning the Deity' that was afforded by means of this miracle, but rather a sign of God's presence with Elijah, and of His favour towards him. However, without pressing this distinction, it may be freely acknowledged that this and some of the other miracles connected with Elijah and Elisha were evidential. The proof of the prophet's mission was the direct object of the wonder worked by Elisha when he crossed the Jordan after Elijah's translation[2], and the acknowledgement of Elijah's claim to be a 'man of God' was the result, if not the object, of the restoration of the widow's son

[1] 1 Kings xviii, esp. vv. 24, 36, 37, 39.
[2] 2 Kings ii. 14.

to life[1]. At the same time, looking at this group of miracles as a whole, it is remarkable that they should be connected with those two men, of the whole line of Hebrew prophets, who had least the character of teachers and most that of statesmen and men of action. Elijah and Elisha, so far as we know, added scarcely anything to the Jewish conception of God's character[2]. They witnessed to God by their deeds rather than by their teaching, and the miracles which they wrought were parts of their lives, essential elements of their acts, rather than proofs of religious doctrines or 'evidence concerning the Deity[3].'

[1] 1 Kings xvii. 24.

[2] Elijah's vision on Mount Horeb is a very noteworthy exception to this statement; it marks a distinct stage in the national apprehension of the Mind of God. But it should also be remarked that 'the still small voice' rebuked the prophet's desire for great signs and marvels, and revealed to him the gradual and patient methods of the Almighty. It was a symbol of the normal, as opposed to the catastrophical theory of Divine action and Divine revelation (1 Kings xix. 15 ff.).

[3] The miracles of Elisha cannot be studied without recognizing that they are exceptional among Biblical miracles in that many of them seem to be purposeless isolated marvels, closely resembling those legendary wonders which have often naturally grown up round some striking historical personality. Old Testament criticism does not enter into the main scope of these lectures; otherwise it would be necessary to inquire how far this marked difference in character ought to lead a critic to reject this part of the Old Testament as unhistorical. For if it is once admitted that

We are in altogether a different region when we go back to the great miracles of the Exodus

criticism has a right to assert that there are in the Biblical narrative later and legendary elements added to the earliest records, as for instance is held to be proved in the Book of Chronicles, no exception can be made in favour of miraculous narratives merely because they are miraculous. Once admit criticism into the study of the Bible, and miraculous events must stand their trial like the rest. But this is not a critical investigation, and the canonical books are here taken as we find them, without thereby prejudging any critical questions. The miracles of Elisha are just as much part of the books which the Jews accepted as inspired and authoritative as are the miracles of Moses, and stand in a similar relation to the question, What place did miracles take in the religious thought of the Jewish race? From this point of view two remarks may be made on the events in question. In the first place, the presence of this small group of miracles in the canonical Scriptures must be taken as qualifying and diminishing the contrast drawn between the miracles of the Bible and those of the Apocryphal and other non-canonical books. The miracles of Elisha, and perhaps a few others of a similar kind in the Old Testament, make the contrast less sharp than it would otherwise be; although even in respect of this portion of the Bible there is a contrast, as will readily be seen on comparing the Elisha-narratives with the miraculous incidents, say in the Book of Tobit, or the evidential character of Elisha's marvels with Josephus' appeal to the evidential force of miracles. In the second place, the presence of miracles, bearing this character, in the canonical books makes the general attitude of the Jewish mind on the subject all the more remarkable and significant. Picturesque and popular though the narrative of Elisha is, there is no evidence that it impressed itself on the Jewish mind, or affected materially the Jewish conception of the meaning and function of miracles. The wonderful works of Elisha are never alluded to elsewhere in the Old Testament and only in one passage in the Apocryphal books (Ecclus. xlviii. 12–14), and their inclusion in the canonical record only serves to render more striking the general indifference of the inspired writers

and the Conquest. Here are no isolated and purposeless marvels, but a series of grand events bound up with the very life of the nation, and having as their declared object the deliverance of the people from bondage, and their separation from all other nations. This being the Divine purpose for Israel, we can see that, humanly speaking, the miracles of the Exodus were necessary for its accomplishment. 'I know that the King of Egypt will not give you leave to go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will put forth My hand, and smite Egypt with all My wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go[1].' The miracles of the Exodus are part of the history of the greatest epoch in the life of the nation. But though this is true of the greater number of these events, it is not true of all. The purpose of

to the merely marvellous as such. For the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon, the lives of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Ezra, and Nehemiah are virtually as bare of miraculous incidents, in the strict sense of the word, as are those of any kings or teachers in our own annals; and though the Chronicler did not shrink from altering the records on which he worked and from giving a later colouring to the historical events which he had to narrate, he adds, except in the one incident of 2 Chron. vii. 7 as compared with 1 Kings viii. 54, no miracle to his story.

[1] Exod. iii. 19, 20.

the passage of the Red Sea was different from the purpose of the transformation of Moses' rod into a serpent, though both were miracles. The one was designed to deliver Israel from the Egyptians, the other to attest the Divine mission of Moses. The fugitive of Midian was sent to his people furnished with certain signs as credentials, and they gave him their confidence on the strength, at the outset, of those signs. 'Aaron spake all the words which the Lord had spoken unto Moses, and did the signs in the sight of the people. And the people believed[1].' In this respect, as I have already pointed out, these miracles of Moses rank with Gideon's fleece and Hezekiah's shadow on the dial, as signs given in answer to a special petition: they are condescensions to human weakness and faithlessness. Only a few, however, of the miracles of the Exodus bear this character. The plagues, the miracles of the desert, the crossing of the Jordan, and the fall of Jericho, are far more than proofs of Moses' mission; they are acts of God's favour and of His vengeance. And even as proofs their scope is strictly limited. They are credentials of a mission, not vouchers for the truth

[1] Exod. iv. 30, 31.

of a revelation. It was in order to win the trust of the people whom he was to lead that Moses was 'charged' with signs from God: but the full revelation of Sinai came afterwards, and it was proclaimed with no appeal to miraculous signs, but on the strength of its own truth and majesty alone.

From a study, then, of the way in which the Old Testament miracles are said to have occurred, we may infer that their primary and essential object was to carry out the Divine purposes: they are integral parts of the history of the call, separation, and preservation of the chosen people: that a secondary result was to illustrate and explain the revelation of God made through His messengers, Moses and the prophets, and that in some few cases, and those by no means the most important, they served as credentials of a prophet and attestations, not so much of the truth of his message as of the authority of his mission[1]. This inference is confirmed by an examination of the manner in which the Old Testament writers, and especially the prophets, appeal to the miraculous events of Jewish history. The only miracles appealed to, or even referred

[1] Cf. Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, pp. 15, 16.

to in the Old Testament are those of the Exodus. No later wonders, not even the remarkable miracles of Elijah and Elisha, are even mentioned by any writers except the historian who records them. But the prophets and psalmists are full of references to the signs and wonders in Egypt, and—though by no means so frequently—to the miracles of the desert and the conquest. They do not, however, appeal to these events as proving, by their preternatural character, the Divine origin of the law, or as having any direct evidential relation to the truths of their religion. The appeal is rather intended to remind their hearers of God's special favour to His people. 'I will make mention of the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us; and the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which He hath bestowed on them. . . . He remembered the days of old, Moses, and His people, saying, Where is He that brought them up out of the sea . . . that divided the water before them, to make Himself an everlasting name[1]?' This is a typical instance of the prophetical appeal to miracles: it is con-

[1] Isa. lxiii. 7, 11 ff.

fined to those of the Exodus, and it is intended to recall the pre-eminent privilege of Israel in the favour of God. And in this respect no distinction is made between the miracles and the other events in which that favour was shown. If the Psalmist records God's 'signs in Egypt, and His wonders in the field of Zoan[1],' he commemorates in the same breath the conquest of Canaan, the division of the country among the tribes[2], the glorious reign of David[3], the recall from the Captivity[4]. All rank equally as great and signal favours of God towards His people; no special stress is laid on some of these events because they are miracles, still less are they used as proofs or attestations of the revelation which God was making of Himself throughout the whole course of Jewish history. The method of the inspired writers is indeed very different from that of our evidential divines. When the prophets would convince their hearers of the righteous character, the power and the wisdom of Jehovah, it is not to any exceptional or abnormal marvels that they appeal, but to the ordinary course of nature, the creation and sustainment of the

[1] Ps. lxxviii. 43.
[2] Ibid. v. 55.
[3] Ibid. lxxviii. 72.
[4] Ibid. cvi. 46 f.

universe by God alone. 'There is none like unto Thee, O Lord; Thou art great, and Thy name is great in might. . . . Among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto Thee. . . . Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by His discretion. When He uttereth His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; He maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of His treasures[1].' This characteristic of Old Testament theology is specially noticeable in that book which more than any other Jewish writing deals with the philosophical problems of natural religion. There is no allusion to miracles, as we understand the word, in the Book of Job, but the power, the wisdom, the inscrutability of God are shown in the normal processes of the world which He created, and which He alone comprehends. 'Behold, God is great,

[1] Jer. x. 6–14.

and we know Him not, neither can the number of His years be searched out. For He maketh small the drops of waters: they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof: which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly. . . . God thundereth marvellously with His voice; great things doeth He, which we cannot comprehend. For He saith to the snow, Be thou on the earth: likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of His strength. . . . Then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places. Out of the south cometh the whirlwind: and cold out of the north. By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened. . . . Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God[1].' In short, the God of the Old Testament is One whose true revelation is in the natural, not the supernatural:

> 'Doch Deine Boten, Herr, verehren
> Das sanfte Wandeln Deines Tags[2].'

What proof, then, had the Jew of the revelation which is contained in his Scriptures? What were the Hebrew 'evidences of religion'? The question is a natural one for us to ask,

[1] Job xxxvi. 26—xxxvii. 14. [2] *Faust.*

for we can hardly conceive of a revelation unsupported by external proofs, but we shall find no answer in the Old Testament. Apart from the special 'signs' already discussed, the only proof or guarantee of the Divine origin of a message delivered through the prophets was the fulfilment of the prediction: 'If thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken[1].' But even this test seems to have been little regarded[2], and is very rarely mentioned. Twice in the history of Israel are we enabled to watch the development of a crisis in which the mere word of a prophet was opposed to all that seemed most probable, all that the nation feared or hoped. During such a crisis, if ever, we should have supposed that the prophet would have appealed to the visible proof of miraculous works to support the authority of his message. But neither when Isaiah was sustaining the king and the nation under the prolonged suspense of Sennacherib's threats, nor when

[1] Deut. xviii. 21, 22.

[2] Cf. the earlier passage, Deut. xiii. 1–6, already referred to.

Jeremiah, against the whole nation, and against the rival voices of the false prophets[1], counselled reliance on Babylon rather than on Egypt, was any appeal made to miracles or to any external proof whatever. The guarantee of the revelation made through the prophets and teachers of Israel was their own transparent sincerity and overwhelming conviction, and the accordance of their message with the witness of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts. In a word, prophecy, not miracle, is the true basis of Old Testament religion, and the proof of the inspiration of prophecy is the inspiration itself, its echo in the conscience, and the seal which God finally set to it in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. In all else, in the works of God in nature and still more in the occasional wonders which He wrought for His people, the Jewish teachers saw 'but the outskirts of His ways[2]'; beyond and above them were the constant marvels wrought, 'not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts[3].'

[1] For Jeremiah's method of dealing with false prophets see ch. xxiii, and especially ver. 22. The proof of a prophecy, in the widest and truest sense, was its moral force and influence.

[2] Job xxvi. 14. [3] Zech. iv. 6.

Note on the Jewish Apocryphal Books.

The Jewish Apocryphal books do not substantially disturb the conclusions reached from a study of the canonical books of the Old Testament. During the interval between Malachi and the Baptist the Jewish mind did not learn to look upon miracles as the proof of revelation, or as the chief means by which God showed His favour to His people. The fine enumeration of the Divine works in Ecclesiasticus[1], like similar passages in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Job, contains no miracles, and Baruch only alludes to the 'signs and wonders' of the Exodus as Jeremiah does, and indeed in words taken from that prophet[2]. Nor can there be said to be in the Apocrypha any evidential use of miracles. The difference in regard to miracles between the Apocryphal and the canonical books of the Old Testament is threefold. (1) The writers of the post-captivity period naturally dwell more than their predecessors on the historic glories of Israel, and on the great heroes of that history, and in doing so lay more stress on the miracles that some of them wrought than do the canonical writers[3]. (2) There is a strong tendency in some of the Apocryphal writers to invent miracles of an obviously legendary kind. This is not indeed by any means constant or universal. Ben Sira adds no miraculous incidents to the deeds recorded of the Jewish heroes; and while the writer of the Book of Wisdom lets his fancy run riot among the plagues of Egypt and the miracles of the desert, the first book of the Maccabees is absolutely destitute of signs and wonders. On the

[1] Ecclus. xlii. 15—xliii. 33. [2] Baruch ii. 11.

[3] See especially Ecclus. xlviii. 13, 14; also xlvi. 4, 16, 17, 20; xlviii. 3–5, 23; 3 Macc. ii. 2 ff., vi. 2 ff.

other hand, the mythopoeic faculty is seen busily at work in Tobit, 2 and 3 Maccabees, and Wisdom, in a way which, almost unparalleled in the canonical books, is very similar to the later developments of Rabbinical fancy. The contrast between these books and the reticence and dignity of the Old Testament is almost as significant as the contrast between the canonical and the Apocryphal Gospels. (3) The development of Jewish thought in these directions seems to have coincided with a certain growth in the realization of natural law, which, though not universal or uniform, may be traced in several of the non-canonical writings, especially in the Alexandrian Book of Wisdom. Interest in the study of nature had increased, as may be gathered from a comparison of Solomon's attainments described in Wisdom[1] with the scanty enumeration in the Book of Kings[2], and with it a clearer conception of natural law dawned on the Jewish mind. This may be traced not only in the writers who had come into contact with Greek thought, for the repeated references, in Wisdom[3], to the reversal of natural law in the Egyptian plagues and other wonders may be paralleled from the purely Jewish Enoch literature[4], and the idea of the normally

[1] Wisd. vii. 17–21. [2] 1 Kings iv. 29–34.

[3] Wisd. xix. 6, 18, 20: 'The whole creature (*κτίσις*) in his proper kind was fashioned anew (*ἄνωθεν*), serving the peculiar commandments that were given unto them. . . . The elements were changed in themselves by a kind of harmony. . . . The fire had power in the water, forgetting his own virtue: and the water forgat his own quenching nature.' Cf. also Wisd. xvi. 17–25.

[4] Enoch lxxxix. 26: 'The sea gathered itself together and resumed its own nature suddenly, and the water swelled and rose till it covered those wolves.' (Mr. Charles' translation.) Cf. the enumeration of miracles connected with the Exodus in *Pirqe Aboth*, v. 5–7, 9, and the comments of R. Obadiah of Sforno, and

unvarying order of nature which underlies these passages is strongly shown in the elaborate attempt to describe the 'laws' of the heavenly bodies which occupies one section of Enoch[1]; and it is found in Ecclesiasticus[2], as well as in the later canonical writings[3]. But it is the Book of Wisdom which most clearly shows the change in the Jewish attitude towards the miraculous. God, says the writer, 'who made the universe out of formless matter,' might have exercised His almighty power and have punished the Egyptians by the miraculous creation of monstrous beasts to slay them; but He did not because 'He has ordered all things in measure and number and weight[4].' We may see in such a passage as this the germ of the tendency which, fostered by contact with Greek and Roman thought, led Josephus on the one hand to minimize and rationalize the miracles of the Old Testament, narrating them in an obviously apologetic tone[5], and on the other to exaggerate their evidential character as credentials of the prophets[6]. Miracles, to Josephus, are evident violations of the order of nature, and as such can be used to prove what would be other-

R. Israel. 'God wrought great signs and wonders contrary to the nature of things, such as the plagues of Egypt, and the miracles of the Red Sea, &c.' This, though the comment of a later writer, may represent an earlier Jewish view of miracles. (Taylor, *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers*, pp. 81–84.)

[1] Enoch lxxii–lxxix; cf. ii. 1, 2; lxxx. 7.

[2] xvi. 26. [3] Ps. cxlviii. 6.

[4] Wisd. xi. 17, 20. Cf. *Speaker's Commentary* in loc.: 'He loves the ordered regularity of the Kosmos.'

[5] See his treatment of the passage of the Red Sea, *Ant.* II. xvi. 5; of the passage of the Jordan, V. i. 3; of the miracle at Beth-horon, V. i. 17; of Elijah's translation, IX. ii. 2.

[6] Cf. the signs of Moses, II. xii. 3, 4; the miraculous thunder of Samuel, VI. iv. 6; Elijah's fire from heaven, IX. ii. 1.

wise incredible. His theory, which seems to anticipate the eighteenth century view, is stated in its crudest form in connexion with the sign of Hezekiah's dial: 'Things that are beyond expectation, and greater than our hopes, are made credible by actions of a like nature[1].' It does not seem, however, that Josephus represents the popular view of miracles among the Palestinian Jews, either in his own day or at the time of our Lord's ministry. Like the pseudo-Solomon of the Book of Wisdom, Josephus was deeply influenced by Hellenic philosophy and culture; to the popular Jewish mind at the close of the old dispensation miracles were still what we have seen they were to the writers of the Old Testament, parts of God's general treatment of His people, marks of His favour, modes of His manifestation, and only in a very subordinate degree evidences of the truth of His revelation.

[1] *Ant.* X. ii. 1.

II

Miracles in the New Testament

In the last lecture I called attention to the extreme rarity of miracles in the period covered by the Old Testament, and from a study of the manner of their occurrence and of the references to them in the prophetical writings, I inferred that the Old Testament miracles were hardly, if at all, intended as evidence of a revelation, but were rather integral parts of that revelation, Divine acts, not proofs. To-day we come to the question, How far does the New Testament confirm or modify or contradict this inference?

In one respect there is a marked difference between the miracles of the Old and those of the New Testament. Very rare in the whole period that preceded the birth of Christ, in the seventy years after that event they abound. The actual narratives of miracles in the Gospels and Acts do not indeed amount to any very large number, though the two or three years of our

Lord's ministry probably include as many miracles related in detail as the whole Old Testament period. But over and over again, both in the Gospels and the Acts, short summaries of miracles are given which show that those which occurred were out of all proportion to those which are actually narrated. And this miraculous character pervades all parts of the history, and is found, so far as we can judge, in every record and every traditional source embodied in the Gospels. The simplest, and probably the earliest, Gospel is, if anything, fuller of miracles than the others; the latest and most profound record of Christ's teaching lays the greatest stress upon the 'signs' which accompanied it. Again, it has often been pointed out that our Lord's teaching is closely bound up with His miracles. But it is not, I think, so commonly noticed that the miracles not only illustrate and explain the teaching, but are inseparable elements in our conception of the character of Christ. He represents to us the ideal of love and compassion: His own follower described Him as one who 'went about doing good[1].' But does not this conception to a very large extent rest on the miracles which

[1] Acts x. 38.

He performed? 'He went about doing good.' What content can be given to this description except that of the following words, 'healing all that were oppressed of the devil'? The example of the life of Christ, which has been the mainspring of a moral revolution in the world, consists chiefly of miraculous works. The modern tendency is to reject miracles and to confine Christianity to the 'following the blessed steps of His most holy life'; but if the miracles are discarded, the steps which we can trace are very few and faint, and the example, apart from the teaching and from the lesson of His death, grows dim as we strive to realize it[1].

The importance of miracles in the life of Christ may be further inferred from the prominent place they occupy in His commission to His Apostles. And on scrutinizing the Acts and Epistles we are led to think that miracles were quite as numerous in the Apostolic ministry and in the life of the early Christians as in the life and ministry of Christ. They were indeed clearly intended to continue His mighty works, both in degree and in kind. 'As

[1] Cf. Blass, *Acta Apostolorum*, Proleg. § 4, p. 9: 'Omnino id pro comperta re habere debemus, nullam unquam de Christo discipulisque vel sermonem vel scriptum fuisse, quin quaedam miracula contineret.'

My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you [1].' That these words are not to be limited to spiritual gifts and powers is proved by the terms of the earlier commission which He gave to them. It is a recapitulation of the works which He Himself had wrought: 'Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils: freely ye received, freely give [2].' But there is an important exception. He did not commission them to exercise authority over the forces of nature, to still the storm or to change the substance of material things, and we find little trace of such miracles in the Apostolic history. This indicates the general character of the miraculous powers of the Apostles. In their origin, as in their exercise, they were dependent on Christ, and were, as a rule, limited to the express terms of His command. We must bear this in mind when we come to consider the appeal made to their own miracles by the Apostles. At present it is important to recognize that in these gifts, as in everything, the paramount authority of Christ over His Church is preserved.

The facts of the New Testament miracles are too well known to need further discussion; but

[1] John xx. 21. [2] Matt. x. 8.

there are two observations with regard to the manner in which they are said to have occurred which have an important bearing on our main subject. In the first place we have to notice that our Lord's miracles are sometimes ascribed, not to definite and specially exerted acts of will, but to a power inherent and almost, if we may so say, involuntary. I need not dwell on the familiar incident of the woman with the issue of blood, except to notice the language in which St. Mark describes it. Our Lord, he says, 'perceived in Himself that the power proceeding from Him' (literally 'the power from Him') 'had gone forth[1].' The phrase seems to indicate that the Evangelist conceived Christ's miraculous power as an influence radiating from Him, not needing to be summoned by definite acts of will. The same conception appears in St. Luke also. 'Power came forth from Him, and healed them all[2].' 'The power of the Lord was with Him to heal[3].' Even if the less remarkable reading be adopted and the passage rendered, 'the power of the Lord was present to heal them,' it equally seems to imply that there was something involuntary in our Lord's miraculous power. I am not of course

[1] Mark v. 30. [2] Luke vi. 19. [3] Ibid. v. 17.

suggesting that any part of our Lord's work was uncontrolled by His all-holy will; the greatest of His miracles, as He Himself declared, depended entirely on His own voluntary power. 'I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again[1].' But subject to the general control of His will, His miracles seem to have been due to the abiding Divine force inherent in Him, essential to His nature[2], and going forth from Him in influence on the external world and on the souls and bodies of men. This leads us to the second observation I have to make. For if this is so, it is especially remarkable that this inherent power was limited, as it undoubtedly was, not by any occasional acts of will, but by the spiritual condition of those around Him. Nothing is more emphasized in the Gospels than the fact that the miracles of healing depended on the faith of the recipient, or of his friends. This is so marked a feature of the miracles which are

[1] John x. 18.

[2] Cf. Gore, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 48: 'Christ's miracles in fact appear as laws of His nature: there is a healing power or "virtue" which goes out from Him, occasionally even without any special action of His will, as when He perceived that some one had touched Him, for virtue had gone out of Him.' The whole passage should be studied in connexion with the remarks in the text.

narrated at length, that we may infer that, in the cases where they are merely summarized or casually mentioned, faith, though not specified, was a condition of the cure. The power, inherent in Him though it was, did not flow forth indiscriminately on all, but only on those who by a personal or vicarious act of will had so followed, or come, or been brought to Him, that they had given a proof of their faith. And this limitation was not imposed on His power by special acts of choice, varying in particular cases, but seems to have been a pre-existent and essential condition of it. At Nazareth we are not told that as the result of their unbelief He would, but that He 'could do there no mighty work[1].' Now it has sometimes been inferred from this that the Gospel miracles were only subjective phenomena, like faith-healing, due to the great wave of religious emotion caused by the presence of Christ's Personality. I do not here wish to enter on the general questions raised by this theory: for the present I will only point out that it does not meet the facts. For two striking exceptions are made to the rule that faith was required from those who witnessed and from those who were the subjects

[1] Mark vi. 5.

of Christ's miracles. The great signs in which He showed His power over the forces of nature were not only independent of any acts of faith in those who saw them, but were sometimes wrought, as is significantly pointed out by the Evangelists, in face of their unbelief and terror[1]. And a certain class of miracles of healing displays the same independence of the faith of the recipient. Evil spirits at once confess the presence of their Lord, and in many cases are cast out with no requirement of faith from the sufferer's friends. The forces of evil, like those of nature, were unconditionally subject to Him: and their outcries seem to show that the inherent power by which His miracles were performed directly and necessarily affected the evil spirits in His presence. The impression left by a careful study of the Gospel miracles is that the Evangelists wish to depict One before whose indwelling majesty the powers of nature and the most evil influences of the spirit of wickedness bowed in immediate submission, and whose Divine virtue and loving force could be resisted, and often were resisted, by the freedom of man's will alone.

I should not have thought it needful to dwell

[1] Mark iv. 6; vi. 51 f.; Luke v. 4 ff.

so long on the mere facts of the miraculous element in the New Testament but for recent utterances which seem to show that the immense distinction between the miracles of the Old and those of the New Testament is not always clearly grasped. There are signs that the old 'mythical' theory of Christ's miracles is being revived, but under a different phraseology. They are now said to be not mythical, but legendary and poetical embellishments of the narrative. Now we have seen that we need not shrink from admitting the poetical character of some of the apparently miraculous narratives in the Old Testament, and if similar characteristics can be fairly detected in any of the miraculous incidents of the New Testament by all means let criticism point them out, and we will accept those incidents as poetry and not as history. But is it not trifling with words to call the miraculous narratives of the Gospels and Acts poetical? In the Old Testament the distinction is one of form, which can be appreciated even in a translation; but can the closest inspection of the original detect poetical form in such narratives as the feeding the 5,000, or the centurion's servant, or the raising of Lazarus? And if it is said that the poetry

consists, not in the form of these episodes, but in the matter, that is only another way of saying that this sort of criticism *will* not except miracles as historical, however historically narrated. It is equally vain to attempt to prove that the miracles are legendary, or mere illustrations of the narrative. You have in the Gospels and Acts a number of incidents narrated in the same tone, with the same historical and topographical circumstances, and relating to the same historical personages. What reason can be given for calling some of these incidents legendary and others historical? Absolutely none, except that some are miraculous and others are not. But the *a priori* incredibility of miracles to which appeal is thus made is a matter, not for historical or literary criticism to decide, but for physical science and philosophy. To call the vast majority of the New Testament miracles legends or illustrations, in contrast to the history in which they are found, is therefore to push criticism beyond its proper scope, and to confuse and discredit it as a scientific study.

In view of such theories let us recall the evidence on which the miraculous character of the New Testament history rests. That character is not contained only in the actual

narratives themselves, but colours and impregnates the whole history. It is shown by the attitude of the Jewish people, who, ready as they undoubtedly were to accord a somewhat contemptuous belief to miracles in general, saw in Christ's miracles no mere magic, but a new revelation. 'What is this? a new *teaching*! with authority He commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him[1].' It is contained in the very structure of the Evangelic records, for as the critics confess, the miraculous cannot now be extricated from the rest of the history: it has supplied the very form of St. John's Gospel, which is governed and defined by the miraculous incidents on which many of the discourses depend. And above all, it is contained in the historical delineation of our Lord Himself, who accepted the belief in His miracles and the vast distinction between His works and other wonders, who used them as means of impressing His character and displaying His love, who incorporated them into His teaching. In a word, obliterate the miraculous from the New Testament, and you obliterate Christ.

I have dwelt thus on the circumstances and

[1] Mark i. 27.

the evidence of the New Testament miracles partly because the extent and nature of the miraculous element in Christianity seems, in spite of its obviousness, to be insufficiently realized, and partly because a firm grasp of the facts is necessary if we would appreciate the manner in which the New Testament writers deal with miracles, and the place which they assign to them. For when we turn from the actual facts to the impression they made on those who witnessed them, and to the manner in which our Lord and His Apostles speak of them, we are conscious of an unexpected and perplexing hesitation and reticence. Even among the Jews, deeply as they were moved by the miracles, which seemed to them different from all others, they did not, it is clear, always or even generally produce conviction. The Pharisees found it easy to ascribe them, or to pretend to ascribe them, to Beelzebub[1]; Herod, in a very significant phrase, declared his belief that God had raised John the Baptist from the dead, and that, as a result of the special relation implied by such an act, miraculous powers worked in him[2]. In neither case could miracles by themselves prove that the worker was Divine,

[1] Matt. ix. 34. [2] Mark vi. 14.

or even that He was the Messiah. And though the multitude, less prejudiced than the Pharisees, were inclined to infer the Messiahship of our Lord from His miracles, it is clear that there were difficulties in the way, and the proof was neither convincing nor lasting. On the one hand some would lay the weight of proof on the number rather than on the character of the miracles. 'When the Christ shall come, will He do *more* signs than those which this man hath done[1]?' The question shows that however genuine the miraculous works, the worker was not thereby proved to be the Messiah. On the other hand, many were led by the prophetic indications in the Old Testament to demand some miracle different in kind, a special sign, unmistakeable and overwhelming, of a Divine commission[2]. 'What sign showest Thou?' 'What doest Thou for a sign, that we may see, and believe Thee[3]?' Our Lord, in one of His answers to this persistent demand, acknowledges that His miracles were not signs in this sense. 'There shall *no* sign be given unto this generation[4].' Probably

[1] John vii. 31. [2] Ibid. ii. 18. [3] Ibid. vi. 30.

[4] Mark viii. 12. The exception given in Matt. xii. 39, 'the sign of the prophet Jonas,' whatever it may mean, cannot refer to those of Christ's miracles which we are now discussing. The Resurrection must be considered apart.

the Jews themselves hardly knew what they wished for, for an absolutely convincing sign seems, as we come nearer to it, to elude our grasp; it is an impossibility[1]. But at all events all the indications in the Gospels show that the miracles were not such signs. They did not convince, and were not intended to convince, those who had no eye for the moral and spiritual proofs of Christ's Divinity. Hence we are prepared for the final failure of the miraculous works, culminating though they did in the pre-eminent sign of the raising of Lazarus, to produce faith. 'Though He had done so many signs before them, yet they believed not on Him[2].'

The Apostolic writers also show a certain apparent inconsistency in dealing with miracles. On the one hand they are unquestionably regarded as to some extent a ground of belief. Thus St. John connects the first 'sign' at Cana with the manifestation of Christ's glory and the belief of His disciples[3]: and in summing up his Gospel he declares that he selected certain 'signs,' 'that ye may believe that Jesus is Christ,

[1] Cf. Romanes, *Thoughts on Religion*, p. 147: 'I doubt whether it is logically possible for any form of objective revelation of itself to compel belief in it.'

[2] John xii. 37. [3] Ibid. ii. 11.

the Son of God[1].' The same appeal to the evidence of miracles is made by St. Peter in his earliest addresses recorded in the Acts. 'Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by powers and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you[2]': and in his address to Cornelius our Lord's miracles are mentioned as part of the whole series of events to which the Apostles bore witness, though no stress is laid on their evidential character[3]. Again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews the Apostles' miracles are claimed as a Divine confirmation of the Gospel preached by them: 'God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His own will[4],' a passage which resembles the summary at the close of St. Mark's Gospel, 'the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs following[5].' But though these appeals to the evidential force of miracles cannot be overlooked or explained away, on the whole what strikes even a casual reader of the Acts and Epistles is the remarkable rarity of

[1] John xx. 30 f.
[2] Acts ii. 22, to which may be added iii. 13 (see Blass, in loc.).
[3] Acts x. 38. [4] Heb. ii. 4. [5] Mark xvi. 20.

allusions to miracles, not only as proofs of the Gospel, but even as mere events connected with it. I have quoted, I believe, all the plain appeals to miracles as evidence of the truth of the Gospel that are to be found in the speeches and writings of the Apostles; and though there may be others, it is certain that they are very few. I do not of course forget that the New Testament writings are not formal theological treatises, still less apologetic statements of the evidences for the Gospel; but still they do contain specimens of Apostolic preaching and teaching, and whereas the references to miracles are very few, there are passages in which the absence of all mention of them is very significant. In considering this let us bear in mind how miracles are commonly treated by modern apologists. For instance, one great writer[1] gives as the 'distinct particular reasons for miracles, to afford mankind instruction additional to that of nature, and to attest the truth of it.' Another[2] lays down that 'miracles are necessary as the guarantee and voucher for a revelation.' Another[3] calls them 'the most striking and con-

[1] Butler, *Analogy*, Pt. ii. ch. 2.
[2] Mozley, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 5.
[3] Newman, *Essay on the Christian Miracles*, pp. 7, 10.

clusive evidence,' and declares that 'the peculiar object of a miracle is to evidence a message from God.' Now contrast with such language as this the Apostolic method of presenting Christianity. In the two typical speeches in which St. Paul commends faith to the heathen world, when we should have thought the fullest exposition of the evidences of Christianity, to use the modern phrase, was needed, we find no reference whatever to the miracles of our Lord, or to those of the Apostles. At Lystra the argument is that of natural religion: the preacher appeals only to the witness borne by the normal operations of God's providence, 'rains and fruitful seasons,' and this although he had himself just worked a miracle in their presence[1]. At Athens he proclaims the message of repentance, and here also it is based on natural religion, though with a difference. Before the cultured Greeks he points to the natural and normal witness to God borne by the heart of men, and by the consciousness of filial dependence on Him[2]. No doubt he ends by an appeal to the Resurrection: but the Resurrection, though the greatest of miracles, demands separate treatment, and I am now

[1] Acts xiv. 17. [2] Ibid. xvii. 27 f.

dealing with the other 'signs' of Christ and His followers. In the same way the controversial triumphs of St. Stephen are ascribed not to the 'great wonders and signs' which he wrought, but to 'the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake[1].' In the Epistles also the evidence of Christianity is in several places summarized with no allusion to miracles. The stress is laid on prophecy, on the personal knowledge of Christ, on the glory which was revealed in Him, but not on the wonderful works which He wrought. The mystery, St. Paul declares, 'now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all the nations unto obedience of faith[2].' It is to the manifestation of the Life as a whole that St. John witnesses, not to this or that proof or sign of it: 'The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us[3].' The most formal statement of the evidences of the Gospel is given in the Second Epistle of St. Peter, in which the writer contrasts with 'cunningly devised fables' the twofold proof of the faith which he preached.

[1] Acts vi. 8 ff. [2] Rom. xvi. 26. [3] 1 John i. 2.

On the one hand he appeals to his own personal knowledge of the 'majesty' of Christ manifested especially in the Transfiguration: on the other hand to 'the word of prophecy, made more sure[1].' But to miracles, either Evangelical or Apostolic, he makes no appeal. No reference again is made to signs and wonders in several descriptions of the Christian life and of the various aspects of Christian work. The gifts of which St. Paul speaks in the Epistle to the Romans, and which differ according to the grace given to each, are prophecy, and ministry, and teaching, and exhortation, and ruling: but he omits the healings, and exorcisms, and tongues[2]. So to the Corinthians he enumerates[3] the various trials and privileges in and by which the Christian minister makes proof of his vocation, but among them the power of miracles finds no place. Later on in the letters in which the fullest account is given of the ministerial life and work, and the fullest directions for the due fulfilment of the various ministerial functions, the same omission is noticeable: the Pastoral Epistles contain no reference to miraculous gifts. And when, like St. Paul, St. Peter

[1] 2 Pet. i. 16–21. [2] Rom. xii. 6 ff.
[3] 2 Cor. vi. 4–10.

has to remind his readers of the responsibility attaching to the gifts which they had received, he divides them into the two classes of speaking and ministering [1], and ignores, so far as we can judge, the power of working miracles which was equally an endowment of the Apostolic Church.

Now if 'signs and wonders' had been confessedly rare and casual phenomena in the early days of Christianity, we could infer nothing from the rarity with which they are appealed to by the Apostles. But, as we have seen, they were constant and notorious accompaniments of Apostolic preaching, and they constituted a very large part of the external and commonly known facts of our Lord's life. In face of the prominence of miracles in the history of Christ and of His Church, we are bound to try to account for the secondary and obscure place they occupy in the teaching of the Apostles. It is not that the miraculous powers, which are so strongly asserted in the Gospels, are denied or the evidence for them weakened in the Epistles. There is no difference of tone between the Gospels and the Epistles on the subject. With unhesitating readiness and certainty of his readers' agreement, St. Paul refers

[1] 1 Pet. iv. 10, 11.

to miracles as to well-known and undeniable facts, and it is remarkable that these references occur in each of the four undoubted Epistles. Alike in writing to the Romans, the Corinthians, and the Galatians[1], he confidently claims the evidence of miracles for his own Apostolic authority: and indeed speaks of them as the essential signs of an Apostle. 'Truly the signs of an Apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and powers[2].' There can be no question as to the Apostle's conviction of his own miraculous power, or of his unhesitating belief in the miraculous gifts of the Church, e. g. of Corinth, as a body. But definite and clear as his conviction is, there is a certain limitation and qualification in his method of appealing to these powers. They are appealed to, not as evidences of the Gospel revelation, but as credentials of the Apostle. On each occasion, when St. Paul asserts his claim to work miracles he is enforcing his right to the position of an Apostle as against those who denied it: miracles seem to have been the recognized test of Apostolic authority. Now, on what was this based? Was it based

[1] Rom. xv. 18 f.; 1 Cor. xiv. 18; 2 Cor. xii. 12; Gal. iii. 5.
[2] 2 Cor. xii. 12.

on the inherent evidential force of miracles, on the preternatural character which pointed directly to a special Divine commission? The references to it do not support such a view, but rather suggest that miracles were regarded as Apostolic credentials because they were contained in our Lord's commission to His Apostles. Just as we shall see that His own miracles were regarded by Himself as the fulfilment of prophecy, so the Apostolic miracles were 'the signs of an Apostle,' because they fulfilled His prophetic commands. Little or no stress is therefore laid on their intrinsic force as preternatural events, and they are not appealed to by the Apostles as evidences of revelation[1].

It is also probable that miracles, in the strict sense, formed only one element in the 'signs'

[1] The chief apparent exception is Rom. xv. 18, where miracles are said to have been wrought through St. Paul 'for the obedience of the Gentiles.' The whole passage, however, primarily deals with St. Paul's claim to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, and the declaration 'I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ' (ver. 19) cannot mean that he had convinced them of the truth of the Gospel by the evidence of miracles. 'St. Paul's Apostolic labours are a sign of commission because they have been accompanied by a manifestation of more than natural gifts' (Sanday and Headlam, in loc.). In Gal. iii. 5 the miracles which St. Paul declares he worked among them are not appealed to as evidences at all, but are apparently described as gifts conferred by him upon the Church.

which followed the preaching of an Apostle. Spiritual miracles, conversion, outbreaks of religious energy, are apparently included in the manifestations of the new life. This is borne out by the well-known passage in which St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, deals with the whole question of spiritual gifts, with their use and regulation by the Church. In the list of *χαρίσματα* there given[1], it is noticeable that what we should call miraculous gifts are in no way exceptional: they neither stand first, as more marvellous, nor are they in a separate class: they are simply enumerated along with the gifts of wisdom and knowledge and faith. And when the Apostle has to decide upon the relative importance of these various gifts there is no question that to him the moral and spiritual manifestations stand higher than the merely physical wonders: prophecy is preferred to tongues, and love is more excellent than either[2]. With regard to the special miracle of the tongues, if St. Paul regards it as a miracle at all, it is difficult to say whether he ascribes to it any evidential force whatever. The passage is obscure, but it is at least a tenable view that when the Apostle declares that 'tongues are

[1] 1 Cor. xii. 8–11; cf. vv. 28 ff. [2] Ibid. xiv. 1.

for a sign, not to them that believe, but to the unbelieving[1],' he means not a convincing proof but a sign of judgement: inasmuch as the plain preaching of the Gospel has not been received by them they shall only hear what they cannot understand; even as our Lord spoke in parables that those who heard might not understand. Thus explained, the passage shows that this special miraculous gift, so far from being a proof of the Christian revelation, was simply one of the manifestations which accompanied the Christian life, with no evidential force whatever. But it also undoubtedly proves the existence of miraculous gifts in the early Church, and thus presents in a striking form the problem which has to be solved.

How can we reconcile the undoubted recognition of miracles by the Apostles, and the wonderful frequency of their occurrence since the beginning of our Lord's ministry, with the singular rarity of any appeal to them as evidence, and the limitation, in most cases, of that appeal, when it is made, to the establishment of Apostolic authority rather than the truth of the Gospel?

It may be answered that the crowning miracle

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 22.

of the Resurrection was the central point of the Apostles' teaching, and that they made it the sole evidence of Christianity: it was mere superfluity to appeal to other miracles in the presence of this surpassing marvel. Now it is of course true that the Resurrection was the central topic of the Apostles' teaching; but it is not quite true that it so absorbed all other miracles that they were altogether overlooked. In the narrative treatment of our Lord's life this was not so: the lesser miracles are carefully described at great length in the Gospels, and even in the Acts St. Peter, in recapitulating the main outlines of the Gospel story, refers to them. 'He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him[1].' Undoubtedly, however, when the doctrines of Christianity are in question, the Resurrection, and the Resurrection alone of all Christ's miracles, is the core of Apostolic teaching. But is it therefore true to say that the Resurrection was presented chiefly as an evidence of Christianity, or was regarded mainly as a proof of our Lord's Divinity? Now undoubtedly there are some passages in which the writers appeal to the

[1] Acts x. 38.

evidence afforded by the Resurrection. Thus at Athens St. Paul brings his speech to its climax with such an appeal. God, he says, will judge the world 'by the Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead[1].' Again, in the solemn opening of the Epistle to the Romans, our Lord is said to have been 'declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead[2].' In two other passages in which the Resurrection seems to be contemplated as a ground of belief, it is belief in God rather than in the Divinity of Christ; we 'believe on Him that raised Jesus our Lord from the dead[3].' And St. Peter declares that Christ 'was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake, who through Him are believers in God, which raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory; so that your faith and hope might be in God[4].' But these are, I believe, the only places in which the Resurrection seems to be appealed to as an evidence of the faith: at all events it cannot

[1] Acts xvii. 31.
[2] Rom. i. 4.
[3] Rom. iv. 24.
[4] 1 Pet. i. 20, 21.

be said that, on the whole, this is a prominent aspect of that unique event in the Apostolic teaching. The Resurrection is the centre of their teaching, but it is taught, not as the proof of doctrine, but as itself doctrine, as the truth in which all other Christian truths find their climax and interpretation. It would be a very meagre and imperfect, even a false, account of the Apostles' treatment of the Resurrection, to say that it was to them only a 'sign' proving the truth of Christ's teaching. I venture to say that that is the least significant aspect of the Resurrection in the New Testament[1]. St. Paul indeed treats it as a proof, or rather as a pledge[2]: but it is a pledge of our own resurrection, not of the Divinity or of the truth of Christ. Or again, as we have already seen, it is taken as throwing light on God's character, as being an essential part of His self-revelation in Christ. 'Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep with the blood of the eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus Christ, make you perfect in every good thing[3].'

[1] Cf. Westcott, *Gospel of Life*, pp. 223 f.: 'The Resurrection itself was the message, not as being an overwhelming wonder, but so far as it was recognized as the beginning of a new life (Acts xiii. 33).'

[2] 1 Cor. xv. 20.

[3] Heb. xiii. 20.

Again, it is frequently treated as the great instance of the fulfilment of prophecy. 'We bring you good tidings of the promise made to the fathers, how that God hath fulfilled the same unto our children, in that He raised up Jesus[1].' But chiefly it is as an integral part of Christ's manifestation, essential to His manifold offices and work, that the Resurrection is proclaimed by the Apostles. His Divine nature necessitated it. 'Him God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it[2].' It is part of our conception of the Incarnation and of His relation to us. 'Ye were made dead to the law through the body of Christ; that ye should be joined to another, even to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bring forth fruit unto God[3].' It is essential to the priestly office of remission of sins: 'Him did God exalt with His right Hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins[4].' And in thus presenting the Resurrection as the main doctrine of the faith, so far from relying on it to produce conviction of the truth of the Gospel, the Apostles

[1] Acts xiii. 32 f.
[2] Ibid. ii. 24.
[3] Rom. vii. 4.
[4] Acts v. 31.

found it, both among Jews and Gentiles, a difficulty and a stumbling-block. How could that be intended primarily as a proof of Christianity which was received by the Athenians with mockery [1], which was thought 'incredible' by Agrippa [2], which provoked Festus to call St. Paul 'mad [3],' which was the ground of the Sadducean hostility to the Gospel [4], which was denied or explained away by prominent teachers among the Corinthians [5]? We see, then, that the Resurrection was taught as the main doctrine, the completion and crown of the truth in Christ Jesus, that it was received with the greatest incredulity and derision, that it was very rarely appealed to as a proof of Christ's Divinity or of the truth of His teaching. The Resurrection, in a word, is Christ, not evidence for Christ. The Resurrection is the chief miracle of Christianity, but it only makes more apparent the problem we are considering, Why were miracles at once so firmly believed, and so rarely relied upon as the chief evidence or even as an evidence at all of the Christian faith?

The answer is to be found in our Lord's own teaching about miracles. Like the Apostles,

[1] Acts xvii. 32. [2] Ibid. xxvi. 8. [3] Ibid. xxvi. 24.
[4] Ibid. iv. 1, 2; v. 17. [5] 1 Cor. xv. 12.

our Lord certainly occasionally appealed to them as proofs of His mission. Thus, in rebuking His disciples for their want of faith, He pointed to the miracle of the loaves as a proof of His power to provide for their wants[1]. He deliberately intensified the marvellousness of the raising of Lazarus in order to strengthen His Apostles' faith. 'I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent that ye may believe[2].' And on two occasions He seems to have pointed forward to the Resurrection, though in a very mysterious manner, as a 'sign' to the Jews[3]. There are, however, few if any other instances, except one or two sayings which I will discuss later, of a definite appeal to the evidence afforded by His miracles. It may be thought that the answer to St. John the Baptist's inquiry[4] is an appeal of this kind. But is it not clear that our Lord was here pointing to His miracles, not as being in themselves and because of their astonishing character proofs of His mission, but as fulfilling the Messianic prophecies? His answer is a direct reference to two passages of Isaiah, in which

[1] Matt. xvi. 8 ff. [2] John xi. 6, 15.
[3] Matt. xii. 39 f.; xvi. 4; cf. John ii. 18–22.
[4] Matt. xi. 2–6.

the Messiah's work is foretold[1], and the miracles fulfil this and other similar prophecies, not because they are mighty and inexplicable works, but because they manifest the mercy and love of Christ. The inclusion of the words 'the poor have the Gospel preached to them' is a proof that our Lord was not appealing to the miraculous, but to the beneficent character of His works. The same appeal is made by St. Matthew when he assigns as the object of our Lord's miracles of healing 'that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases[2].'

There are, then, very few direct appeals to the witness of miracles by our Lord Himself. And on the other hand He explains this reticence by numerous sayings in which the essential inferiority of the evidence of miracles is plainly asserted. Even when he seems to rely on miracles to produce belief, as in the case of Lazarus[3], it should be remembered that no miracle was necessary for the first impulse of

[1] Isa. xxxv. 5, 6; lxi. 1. [2] Matt. viii. 17.

[3] St. Augustine points out that it was not to produce, but to confirm belief that our Lord appealed to the miracle of Lazarus: 'quamvis tali verbo usus sit, quasi tunc credere inciperent' (*In Ioh. Evang. tractat.* xlix. 11).

faith in the disciples. No sign was given before that night's intercourse with Jesus which knit the foremost Apostles to His side and caused Andrew to proclaim that he had 'found the Messiah [1].' And although a secret sign was given to the prejudiced Nathanael and he believed, our Lord is careful to point out the relative inferiority of such evidence. 'Thou shalt see greater things than these,' i.e. spiritual signs, 'the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man [2].' The note thus struck is maintained throughout our Lord's teaching. If there occurred a momentary access of unreasoning belief in Him because of the signs which He did, the Evangelist adds that 'Jesus did not trust Himself unto them [3]'; knowing, it would seem, how weak and transitory such conviction must ever be. And when immediately afterwards the visit of Nicodemus is narrated, with his assertion that the signs proved their worker to be 'a teacher come from God [4],' it is impossible not to see in our Lord's discourse a rebuke of the attitude of mind thus shown in the 'teacher of Israel' as in the crowd that thronged Jerusalem.

[1] John i. 38–41.
[2] Ibid. i. 48, 50 f.
[3] Ibid. ii. 23 ff.
[4] Ibid. iii. 2.

Belief based on mere signs will carry a man but a very little way. Divine things are not to be judged in this fashion, but can only be 'spiritually discerned[1].' 'Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God[2]': he has no right to assess the claims of Christ to be a Divine Teacher. The inferiority of 'signs and wonders' as the basis of belief is again implied in the answer to the appeal of the nobleman at Cana: 'Except ye see signs and wonders ye will in no wise believe[3].' When He enumerates the various kinds of witness borne to Him, the witness of miracles is quite subordinate[4]. First there was the witness of the Baptist, and then above that, for that is of man and these are of God, are 'the works which the Father hath given Me to accomplish.' But beyond and above both these is the witness of the Father Himself, and the witness of the Scriptures: the voice of God in the testimony of prophecy. The passage no doubt recognizes miracles, or rather works, for the word must not be limited to miraculous signs, as evidence, but evidence of an inferior kind: and this is supported by many sayings of a like import.

[1] 1 Cor. ii. 14.
[2] John iii. 3.
[3] Ibid. iv. 46.
[4] Ibid. v. 31–40.

The appeal is made to them only in the last resort, when belief had not been accorded to Christ's own personal word. 'I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me[1].' And again, 'though ye believe not Me, believe the works[2].' The same declaration is made to His own disciples: 'Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me: or else believe Me for the very works' sake[3].' The 'sayings' of Christ are more than once placed above His works as witnesses to Him. 'He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him[4].' It is true that a responsibility lies on those who rejected the witness of the works: 'If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin': but first comes the responsibility of rejecting His words: 'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin[5].' The

[1] John x. 25. [2] Ibid. x. 28.
[3] Ibid. xiv. 11. [4] Ibid. xii. 48.
[5] Ibid. xv. 22, 24. As Bp. Westcott points out (in loc.), while 'the works' are characterized as those 'which none other man did,' the 'words' are left undefined. 'The works of Christ might be compared with other works; His words had an absolute power.'

whole attitude of our Lord towards miracles may in short be expressed in the words of His declaration to Thomas: 'Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed[1].' Faith based on visible signs is not rejected, for 'those that come' to Him, however they may be drawn, He 'will in no wise cast out[2]'; but far better is it to believe as the Samaritans believed, 'because of His word[3].'

When, however, we infer, from a study of our Lord's treatment of miracles, that they ought not to be regarded as mainly intended for evidences of the Gospel, we may be met with the objection that this view deprives miracles of all rational explanation whatever. If they are not proofs of a revelation, what are they? The answer is to be found in Christ's words: they are 'signs following them that believe[4].' I say these are Christ's words, for, though the passage containing them is almost certainly no part of the Gospel to which it is appended, who would have put into His mouth so unexpected a phrase? He would surely have been made to say 'these signs shall follow

[1] John xx. 29.
[2] Ibid. vi. 37.
[3] Ibid. iv. 41 f.
[4] Mark xvi. 17.

and support your preaching, shall corroborate your doctrine.' Instead of that He declares that miraculous signs shall be the accompaniments, or even the consequences, not the causes of belief. 'These signs shall follow them that believe.' Wonderful powers shall result from the new life imparted by the Holy Spirit: they shall be the outcome and manifestation of the new birth: the faith aroused by Apostolic preaching shall be followed not produced, by victories over physical evil, as well as over spiritual wickedness. And therefore they were regarded as 'signs of an Apostle.' The wonders accompanying Apostolic preaching were not only, or even mainly, miracles worked by the Apostle, but miraculous powers bestowed, as a result of his preaching, upon those who heard and believed him. They were indeed 'signs of an Apostle,' because they were bestowed in accordance with the order of Apostolic ministry marked out by Christ Himself. They followed no irregular or unauthorized course; for the life of which they were partial manifestations flowed in Divinely-ordained channels, and quickened with its regular workings the Divinely-fashioned body of Christ.

Therefore, whether we consider the miracles

of Christ or those of His Church, we see that they were not intended to compel a reluctant belief. Sometimes they may indeed have aroused attention and thus brought men to Christ; now and then perhaps they supplied a real ground and starting-point for faith. The natures of men are various, and God draws them to Him by various means. But, as our Lord showed when He refused to work miracles in order to produce belief in those who would not believe on His word, this was not the purpose and object of miracles; they were rather integral parts of the Divine manifestation, necessary results of the special presence of God in His world. We come back in short substantially to the conclusion reached from a study of the Old Testament miracles. We saw that they were acts of God in the process of redeeming His people and of preparing them for the Divine purposes. And the miracles of the New Testament are likewise acts of redemption, necessary results of the relation between God and His Church. They differ indeed from those of the Old Testament in that since the time when God led Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand the relation had become more close, more vital. In the person of Christ, God tabernacled among

men, and miracles, part of the visible outcome of this Divine indwelling, became therefore for the time continuous, instead of rare manifestations of His presence. But the same principle is exemplified under both dispensations. In neither are miracles intended as proofs to convince the incredulous. In the New as in the Old Testament the evidence of revelation is to be sought elsewhere. By itself a miracle has no moral and therefore no evidential force. The only test for distinguishing Divine from Satanic miracles is that of the moral character and purpose of the worker: and therefore miracles depend for all their force upon a previous appreciation of the character and personality of Christ. Here then is the final and paramount evidence of Christianity. To the demand for a sign, a demand which He declared to be in itself sinful, Christ would return no clear answer except the declaration that He Himself was the true sign offered for their belief. 'A greater than Jonas is here[1].' No miraculous gift of manna, but the living Bread from heaven, should be their sign. 'I am the Bread of Life; . . . but I said unto you that ye have seen Me, and yet believe not[2].' The vision of Christ is the source

[1] Matt. xii. 41. [2] John vi. 35 f.

of a Christian's belief. Think of the doubtful and complex systems of evidence based on external signs and wonders, and then turn to the transparent simplicity of the process of Christian faith and its reward, a process which centres in the person of Jesus Christ. 'This is the will of My Father, that every one who beholdeth the Son, and believeth on Him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day[1].' The pride of man's intellect, craving for a 'rational guarantee[2],' must submit to the method of personal knowledge and obedient intercourse with Christ: we must learn to believe because 'we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world[3].'

[1] John vi. 40.

[2] Mozley, *On Miracles*, p. 25.

[3] John iv. 42.

III

Miracles in the Early Church

In the first two lectures we have examined the position of miracles in the Old and New Testament, and the nature of the appeal made to them by the prophets, by our Lord, and by His Apostles. Now it may be urged that this is inadequate inasmuch as the Bible does not yield, and was not intended to yield, a very definite answer to an inquiry into the evidential methods of Christianity. It is too unsystematic and fragmentary; it does not contain a complete account of the spread of the Gospel, still less of the arguments and proofs by which it was supported. This is true: but the evidence can be partially supplemented by examining the methods of the Christian writers who succeeded the Apostles. It must, of course, be remembered that they also were mostly unsystematic, and that the evidences of Christianity were only by degrees drawn out in regular and philoso-

phical form. Still the methods used by the Apologists of the first four centuries, if examined with due caution, will throw back some light on what is left obscure in the Apostolic age. I propose, therefore, in this lecture to investigate the use made of miracles by the early Apologetic writers, in order to ascertain their view of the evidences of Christianity, and how far it coincided with the methods of proof adopted by our Lord and His Apostles. Even within the limits indicated, I am only too conscious that the survey must be hasty and superficial.

In considering the question of miracles in the early Church, there are two topics to be distinguished. First, we have to ask how far the miraculous powers of the Apostles were continued in the later period: for the answer must needs throw light on the second or main subject of our investigation. The belief in contemporary miracles must have affected the use made by the Fathers of the miracles of our Lord and His Apostles. Till we know how far miracles were regarded as common events we cannot appreciate the view taken of the Biblical 'signs and wonders.' I shall first shortly inquire into the Patristic belief in contemporary miracles, and then consider the place which the Biblical

miracles occupied in the religious system of the early Apologists and theologians.

The question of the existence of miracles in the early Church is complicated by the vague language used by many of the writers. When Clement of Rome [1] and Ignatius [2] speak of the gifts of the Holy Ghost poured out upon the Church of their times, it is impossible to say whether they meant what we should call miraculous gifts: indeed the very fact of the ambiguity shows how little stress in those early days was laid on the miraculous character of such phenomena. Again, several writers use contradictory language on the subject, at one time apparently admitting that no contemporary miracles were wrought, and again claiming for the Church at least some supernatural powers.

But certain facts seem to stand out. In the scanty records of Christian literature before the time of Justin Martyr that remain to us, no clear reference to contemporary miracles is found. Whether the striking Apology

[1] Ad Cor. i. 2 *εἰρήνη βαθεῖα καὶ λιπαρὰ ἐξέδοτο πᾶσιν, καὶ ἀκόρεστος πόθος εἰς ἀγαθοποιΐαν, καὶ πλήρης Πνεύματος Ἁγίου ἔκχυσις ἐπὶ πάντας ἐγίνετο.*

[2] Ad Smyrn. *ἐκκλησίᾳ . . . ἠλεημένῃ ἐν παντὶ χαρίσματι, πεπληρωμένῃ ἐν πίστει καὶ ἀγάπῃ.*

which has recently (1891) been recovered for us, by learning and energy of which Cambridge is justly proud, is earlier than Justin is doubtful, but, at all events, Aristides makes no allusion to miraculous powers in his beautiful description of the lives and practices of Christians[1], but is content to appeal to the witness of lofty teaching and of noble and kindly deeds. But with Justin we reach a period in which miraculous gifts of certain kinds are freely claimed for Christians. The exorcism of evil spirits is by far the most commonly mentioned of these gifts[2], but healing[3], including the restoration of sight to the blind[4], is also ascribed to contemporary Christians: while in more doubtful and vague language they are even said[5] to have raised the dead. It may

[1] *Apologia Aristidis*, XV (Greek Text), XIV (translation from the Syriac Text). *Texts and Studies*, ed. by J. Armitage Robinson, vol. i. pp. 110, 48.

[2] Just. M. *Apol.* ii. 6; *Dial.* 30, 85.

[3] Just. M. *Dial.* 39, speaking of converts to Christianity *οἱ καὶ λαμβάνουσι δόματα ἕκαστος . . . ὁ μὲν γὰρ λαμβάνει συνέσεως πνεῦμα, ὁ δὲ βουλῆς, ὁ δὲ ἰσχύος, ὁ δὲ ἰάσεως, ὁ δὲ προγνώσεως, ὁ δὲ διδασκαλίας, ὁ δὲ φόβου θεοῦ.* Cf. also Iren. II. xxxii. 4.

[4] Iren. II. xxxi. 2.

[5] Iren. II. xxxii. 4. Cf. also Papias ap. Euseb. *H. E.* iii. 39 *ὡς δὲ κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς ὁ Παπίας γενόμενος, διήγησιν παρειληφέναι θαυμασίαν ὑπὸ τῶν τοῦ Φιλίππου θυγατέρων μνημονεύει, τὰ νῦν σημειωτέον. νεκροῦ γὰρ ἀνάστασιν κατ' αὐτὸν γεγονυῖαν ἱστορεῖ.* For a discussion

seem strange to some that the evidence should be stated in so limited a manner: it is commonly thought that the early Church laid claim to an unbounded power of miracles, and that the Fathers generally narrate the most extravagant legends of wonder-workings. Such, however, is not the case. If the habitually rhetorical language of Tertullian be discounted there is very little in the Ante-Nicene literature to remind one of the thaumaturgical stories of later ages. The language, indeed, of the most trustworthy and thoughtful writers, of Justin, Irenaeus, and Origen, is singularly cautious and guarded. Origen, for example, who, from the character of the controversy in which he was engaged, is probably the best authority on the subject, habitually speaks [1] of contemporary miracles as only the 'traces' of the powers which the Apostolic Church enjoyed: and so far as I know never asserts the existence of any powers

of the evidence as to raising the dead see Blunt, on the *Right Use of the Early Fathers*, pp. 387–8; Mozley's *Bampton Lectures*, p. 295, 3rd ed. 1872.

[1] *Ἔτι ἴχνη τοῦ ἁγίου ἐκείνου πνεύματος, ὀφθέντος ἐν εἴδει περιστερᾶς, παρὰ Χριστιανοῖς σώζεται*, Orig. *c. Cels.* i. 46. *σημεῖα δὲ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος κατ' ἀρχὰς μὲν τῆς Ἰησοῦ διδασκαλίας, μετὰ δὲ τὴν ἀνάληψιν αὐτοῦ πλείονα ἐδείκνυτο, ὕστερον δὲ ἐλάττονα. πλὴν καὶ νῦν ἔτι ἴχνη ἐστὶν αὐτοῦ παρ' ὀλίγοις, τὰς ψυχὰς τῷ λόγῳ καὶ ταῖς κατ' αὐτὸν πράξεσι κεκαθαρμένοις*, Ib. vii. 8.

beyond those of healing and exorcism. But of these powers he asserts himself to have been a personal witness[1]; so that the very moderation of his language only makes his evidence the more weighty. When, however, we pass from the second and third to the fourth and later centuries, we find ourselves in a wholly different atmosphere. Miracles are not only far more frequently appealed to, but they have changed their character. Instead of carefully limited assertions of powers of healing, supported by the personal testimony of great writers, we have stories of all sorts of marvels, related for the most part with little or no attempt to sift them and with little or no corroboration. Instead of powers residing in the Church as a body, the later miracles are frequently ascribed to eminent persons as part of the general witness of the popular voice to their sanctity, or as a proof of their orthodoxy. The growth of this tendency may be traced by a comparison of such a writer as Eusebius with those who preceded and with

[1] Τεράστια ὧν κἂν ἴχνη ἐπὶ ποσὸν παρὰ Χριστιανοῖς εὑρίσκεται, καί τινά γε μείζονα· [i. e. than among the Jews.] καὶ εἰ πιστοί ἐσμεν λέγοντες, ἑωράκαμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς, Orig. *c. Cels.* ii. 8. τούτοις γὰρ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἑωράκαμεν πολλοὺς ἀπαλλαγέντας χαλεπῶν συμπτωμάτων, καὶ ἐκστάσεων καὶ μανιῶν, καὶ ἄλλων μυρίων, ἅπερ οὔτ' ἄνθρωποι, οὔτε δαίμονες ἐθεράπευσαν, Ib. iii. 24.

those who followed him. Compared with Origen or Irenaeus, Eusebius is credulous enough and bears the stamp of the later legendary tendency; but when we turn to his successors as Church historians, to Socrates and Sozomen, Eusebius appears moderate and critical in his treatment of contemporary miracles. Eusebius, in fact, stands on the border line between the two periods I am contrasting. It is not till after the Nicene Council, and the secular triumph of the Church, that the thaumaturgic instinct obtained full possession of the Christian mind, and that a stock of purposeless marvels became an indispensable element in every Church history[1].

[1] If the Life of Antony is rightly ascribed to St. Athanasius—which seems to be more than doubtful—that great Father may be claimed not only as a personal witness to an act of exorcism (*Vita Ant.* ch. 71), but as a narrator, no less credulous than his contemporaries and successors, of many marvels of the later type. Whoever the author was, the Life is important for our purpose as exemplifying the growth of belief in such miracles at the time. The traditional duration of Antony's life, A. D. 250 to 356, coincides with the transition from the earlier to the later period of miraculous narratives. Indeed it may be suggested that one, perhaps the chief, cause of the development was the growth of the monastic system. The later miracles owe much of their peculiar character to the prolonged fastings and austerities which became fashionable under that system, and were greedily accepted by people who had been taught to venerate saints in proportion to their powers of endurance.

But must we on that account deny the existence of miracles altogether, and in both periods? The common view is that the exaggeration of the fourth century is an argument against even the moderation of the second, that the thaumaturgic tendency developed continuously, and that if we disbelieve the later marvels we must reject the earlier miraculous powers. The inference is surely not a necessary one. It is at least equally reasonable to investigate the evidence in the earlier period on its own merits, and if it seems to prove that certain phenomena then existed, to see whether the later period also contains traces of similar phenomena, overlaid though they may be by obviously legendary marvels. Now we have seen that there is in the second and third centuries a consensus of evidence as to miraculous gifts of healing and exorcism, and a few much more doubtful assertions of raisings from the dead. Considering the similar evidence for the existence of these gifts in the Apostolic Church, I own I do not see sufficient reason for rejecting the definite statements of such a man as Origen on events which occurred under his own observation. The evidence is certainly not strong enough to prove that the dead were

raised; but that in the early Church special powers of healing and exorcism existed, however they may be explained, is, I believe, as certain as other historical facts of the same date. At all events, we have no right to deny them because legendary marvels were obviously invented or imagined in a later age. For when we come to examine the evidence for these, we find, along with stories which criticism must reject, other statements resembling those of Origen and Irenaeus, viz. declarations by great Christian teachers of saintly character that they themselves had seen miracles of healing and exorcism. That there is a continuous series of such assertions from the second to the fifth centuries seems to prove the truth of the earlier rather than the falsity of the later miracles. Indeed the most vigorous critic may well pause before taking up a position which is only tenable on the assumption that St. Ambrose was an impostor and St. Augustine a dupe.

Whether these powers were strictly miraculous or not is another question, into which I do not now propose to enter. That they existed, and were believed by all at the time to be miraculous, is, I cannot but think, proved,

and it has an important bearing upon our subject. For the general belief in contemporary miracles no doubt accounts in part for the want of emphasis in the appeal made by the early Christians to our Lord's miracles. Wonders were too frequent to prove the unique character of our Lord. They had become the common possession of the Church. But though this was no doubt one view of miracles in the early ages, there was also another which is in reality inconsistent with it. Our Lord's miracles, indeed those of the New Testament generally, were spoken of as distinct from those of later times, so that while on the one hand the existence of contemporary miracles is definitely asserted, as we have seen, by a series of writers from Justin Martyr to Augustine, many of the same writers elsewhere declare that miracles had ceased after the days of the Apostles. The explanations of this apparent contradiction given by Newman and by Mozley do not seem altogether satisfactory. Newman, considering only the later and more legendary miracles, declares that they were put on a different level from those of the New Testament because they were only locally known, or were more startling and even

grotesque in their character. This is true of many of the fourth-century miracles, but not of the wonderful powers described by second-century writers. They are spoken of as well-known, and they are obviously of the same kind as many of the New Testament miracles. Mozley makes the distinction to consist in the greatness of the Gospel miracles as compared with the mass of ecclesiastical healings and exorcisms. But in the Acts the proportion of healings and exorcisms to such great miracles as raising the dead is just as large as in the later accounts, for though, as I have said, the evidence is not strong enough to prove to us that the dead were raised, there is no question that Irenaeus and Augustine, to mention no others, believed that they were. And if they believed that the dead were raised in their own day, they could hardly have distinguished the miracles of the New Testament from the ecclesiastical miracles on the ground of their greatness. The question is undoubtedly perplexing. The inconsistency has been variously explained. In Augustine's case it may perhaps be accounted for by a change of opinion[1]. His assertion that miracles had ceased is found in

[1] See Nitzsch, *Augustinus' Lehre vom Wunder*, 32–35.

his earlier writings; it is in the later Retractations that he withdraws the assertion, and at the close of the *De Civitate*[1] he answers the question—why miracles no longer happen?—by a long catalogue of those which he either personally witnessed or had strong grounds for believing. But it is not Augustine alone who displays this inconsistency. Why did Origen, as we have seen, speak of contemporary miracles as only 'traces' of the powers conferred on the Apostles? Why did Chrysostom, who believed that the relics of martyrs could heal the sick, yet give elaborate explanations of the cessation of miracles in his day[2]? I venture to suggest that a partial explanation is to be found in the general theory of miracles among early writers. In themselves miracles had but little significance. The early conception of natural laws was weak, and an apparent miracle did not necessarily prove its worker to have Divine power. It was the connexion of miracles with prophecy that gave to the miracles their evidential force. As we saw in

[1] Bk. xxi. 8.

[2] Hom. in 1 Cor. vi. *τότε χρησίμως ἐγίνετο, καὶ νῦν χρησίμως οὐ γίνεται . . . οὐκοῦν ὅσῳ ἂν φανότερα καὶ ἀναγκαστικώτερα ἦ τὰ γενόμενα, τοσούτῳ τὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐλαττοῦνται· διὰ τοῦτο σημεῖα νῦν οὐ γίνεται.*

the case of our Lord and the Apostles, the correspondence of miraculous works with foregoing announcements made them proofs of Divine authority, and the same conception is found in most of the early Patristic writers. But this connexion with prophecy did not exist, or at all events was not so obvious, in the case of the ecclesiastical miracles. Our Lord's wonders, they continually repeat, were directly and minutely foretold; the Apostles were empowered by Him to carry on His works. No such prophetic anticipations could be traced for the miracles of later ages, and therefore, though they firmly believed in them, they regarded them as altogether inferior to the signs and wonders of the New Testament.

Whether this explanation be sound or not, there can be no question as to the fact that this was a prevalent view of the relation between miracles and prophecy among the early Patristic writers. Speaking generally, they subordinate in a very marked way the evidence of miracles to that of prophecy. In the earliest period the rarity of all allusions to the miracles of Christ and His Apostles is very striking. The Apostolic Fathers, whose writings of course afford but fragmentary and slender data on which

to base any generalization, but for one or two more or less vague allusions might seem to be ignorant that any special miraculous works were performed by our Lord. Ignatius[1] ignores all miracles, except the Resurrection, when he summarizes the facts of Christ's life; Clement[2] regards the Resurrection as the source of the Apostles' conviction, but makes no further reference to the miracles; while the Epistle of Barnabas contains[3] one allusion to the 'signs and wonders' by which our Lord preached to Israel. In short the Apostolic Fathers, while obviously recognizing the historical facts of Christ's life, and showing their acquaintance with substantially the same Evangelical tradition as that which we now possess, do not lay stress on the historical details, even when they include such marvellous incidents as the miracles. They certainly do not make them the basis of the faith.

But it will be said these ancient writers were not Apologists, and we must not try to extract

[1] Ad Magn. 11, ad Trall. 9.

[2] Ad Cor. i. 42 *παραγγελίας οὖν λαβόντες, καὶ πληροφορηθέντες διὰ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ πιστωθέντες ἐν τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ θεοῦ, μετὰ πληροφορίας Πνεύματος Ἁγίου, ἐξῆλθον εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ μέλλειν ἔρχεσθαι.*

[3] ch. v. 8.

from them the principles of Christian Apology. Let us then look at the succeeding group of writers, the Apologists properly so called, who had to commend the faith to the heathen and Jews among whom they lived. The earliest of these were occupied with defending the lives of Christians rather than the doctrines of Christianity, and in face of the heathen world they drew their strongest proofs from a contrast of the moral tendencies of the Christian with those of the heathen faith, rather than from the miraculous phenomena which were thought to be common to both. But we may infer something from the allusions, and still more from the absence of allusions, to miracles even in the earliest Apologists. The one sentence that remains to us of the Apology of Quadratus[1] contains an argument based on our Lord's miracles; but without the context we cannot estimate the doctrinal significance of the appeal. On the other hand, the recovered treatise of Aristides makes no use whatever of miracles,

[1] Ap. Euseb. *H. E.* iv. 3 *τοῦ δὲ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν τὰ ἔργα ἀεὶ παρῆν. ἀληθῆ γὰρ ἦν· οἱ θεραπευθέντες· οἱ ἀναστάντες ἐκ νεκρῶν· οἳ οὐκ ὤφθησαν μόνον θεραπευόμενοι, καὶ ἀνιστάμενοι, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀεὶ παρόντες· οὐδὲ ἐπιδημοῦντος μόνον τοῦ Σωτῆρος, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀπαλλαγέντος, ἦσαν ἐπὶ χρόνον ἱκανόν· ὥστε καὶ εἰς τοὺς ἡμετέρους χρόνους τινὲς αὐτῶν ἀφίκοντο*

but dwells exclusively on the moral results of Christianity. When, again, Tatian the Apologist, the fierce assailant of Greek religion and philosophy, enumerates the causes of his conversion to Christianity, miracles find no place in the list[1]. 'What persuaded me in these books was the simplicity of the language, the inartificial style of the writers, the noble explanation of creation, the predictions of the future, the excellence of the precepts, and the assertion of the government of all by one Being.' The mention of prophecy, and the absence of miracles, are natural enough in a pupil of Justin Martyr, for Justin, the chief of the early Apologists, bases his system on prophecy, and makes miracles wholly subordinate to it. When confronted with the difficulty, the standing difficulty of the time, that Christ's works were perhaps only magic, he answers[2] by appealing to prophecy. Not only was He foretold, but His

[1] Oratio, ch. xxix.

[2] *Ὅπως δὲ μή τις ἀντιτιθεὶς ἡμῖν, τί κωλύει καὶ τὸν παρ' ἡμῖν λεγόμενον Χριστόν, ἄνθρωπον ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ὄντα, μαγικῇ τέχνῃ ἃς λέγομεν δυνάμεις πεποιηκέναι καὶ δόξαι διὰ τοῦτο υἱὸν Θεοῦ εἶναι, τὴν ἀπόδειξιν ἤδη ποιησόμεθα, οὐ τοῖς λέγουσι πιστεύοντες, ἀλλὰ τοῖς προφητεύουσι πρὶν ἢ γενέσθαι κατ' ἀνάγκην πειθόμενοι διὰ τὸ καὶ ὄψει ὡς προεφητεύθη, ὁρᾶν γενόμενα καὶ γινόμενα, ἥπερ μεγίστη καὶ ἀληθεστάτη ἀπόδειξις καὶ ὑμῖν, ὡς νομίζομεν, φανήσεται,* Just. Mart. *Apol.* i. ch. 30; cf. *Dial.* ch. 69.

miracles were foretold also. And when the further thought crosses his mind that the prophets themselves needed some credentials, he points indeed to their miracles, i. e. probably to those of Moses, but he appeals not to their preternatural but to their moral and religious force[1]. Here we have the two essential elements in the Patristic treatment of Christian miracles: the stress laid on their moral character, and their complete subordination to prophecy. Even when a writer like the late Apologist Arnobius completely neglects prophecy, and rests his proof almost wholly on Christ's miracles, he is careful to point out that they differed from magic, not only by the absence of any external aid and of ceremonials, but by their beneficent character. This indeed was their object, 'that hardened and unbelieving men, from the kindness of His works, might learn to apprehend the nature of the true God[2].' Arnobius, however, stands alone in his exclusive appeal to miracles. No doubt

[1] *Καίτοι γε καὶ διὰ τὰς δυνάμεις, ἃς ἐπετελοῦν, πιστεύεσθαι δίκαιοι ἦσαν, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τὸν ποιητὴν τῶν ὅλων θεὸν καὶ πατέρα ἐδόξαζον καὶ τὸν παρ' αὐτοῦ Χριστὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ κατήγγελλον, Dial.* ch. 7.

[2] Arnobius i. 47 'Quae quidem ab eo gesta sunt et factitata, non ut se vana ostentatione iactaret, sed ut homines duri, atque increduli scirent non esse, quod spondebatur, falsum; et ex operum benignitate, quid esset Deus verus, iam addiscerent suspicari.'

in the second period of Apology the great Christian writers accepted and declared the evidential force of miracles far more clearly than Justin had been able to do, but they do so with significant qualifications. The great conception which appears in Irenaeus[1] and Tertullian[2], to be developed afterwards with striking force by Athanasius, is the conception that the works of Christ, including His miracles, were intended as revelations of the creative Word of God, who in the beginning made all things, and after the Incarnation in the Person of Jesus Christ displayed the same power over nature and men by His works. Miracles, then, are proofs of Christ's Divinity, but they are proofs not by virtue of their preternatural power, or because they violate the laws of nature, but because they are creative and therefore in keeping with the nature and character of Him who was and is the creative Word of God. Hence the relation of miracles to prophecy is part of Christian evidence, partly because the power of foretelling the future is a Divine gift and therefore proves the Divinity of Him who is foretold and of His works, but partly also

[1] Irenaeus, V. xii. 5 ff.; xv. 2.
[2] Tertullian, *Apol.* 21.

because prophecy shows that He is identical with the Word. The miracles were foretold in the future because He had wrought similar works in the past. Miracles therefore can never be considered apart from their character as creative and beneficent acts. The Logos revealed Himself in them, for He who originally formed man 'when,' as Irenaeus says, 'He found His own work shattered by sin, healed it in every way[1].' In this respect the controversy with Gnosticism was of great value to the development of Church doctrine, for in opposing the wild theory that the Creator was a different and inferior Being to the Supreme God, the Christian Apologists were led to lay stress on the identity of Christ the Son of God with the Logos, the Maker of all, and thus to prepare for that profound doctrine of the Incarnation which we find in St. Athanasius. In this view the mere miracles of Christ, considered in themselves, are wholly subordinate. Tertullian dismisses them almost with contempt, when Marcion would have him discard prophecy and rely wholly on the evidence of miraculous works. Why, he retorts, they may be, as Christ Himself declared, the signs of a false Christ: but

[1] Irenaeus V. xii. 5.

He who is proclaimed beforehand to do such works, He is the very Word of God, not by virtue of the works, but by virtue of the solemn announcement by God[1]!

During this early period, then, the theory of miracles is in accordance with what we saw was the New Testament treatment of them. They are evidence, but of a subordinate kind: subordinate to prophecy, and subordinate also to the moral test to which our Lord had subjected them. But hitherto no stress has been laid on their preternatural character, and the question of their relation to the order of nature has never arisen. That question first meets us in Origen. Here we have for the first time a defence of Christianity, not against the prejudices of heathen emperors or peoples, or of Jewish bigots, but against the definite, clever, and fairly instructed attack of a philosopher. In Origen's answer to Celsus nearly every topic which has formed the subject of later apologies is brought forward: and in his treatment of miracles two distinct methods lie side by side. There can be no question that he ascribed evidential force to miracles. He held that our Lord, and still more His Apostles, could not have convinced the world

[1] *Adv. Marcionem*, iii. 3.

without the evidence of miracles[1]. Yet he holds this view for reasons which mark the essential inferiority of miracles. The Apostles could not have succeeded without miracles, for the common people had learnt to ask for signs and wonders[2]. The Jews had become accustomed to them, even to such as the Resurrection[3]. The heathen also believed in magic, and in the miracles which were narrated in their mythology; and if no miracles had been wrought among the Jews, they would have renounced God in favour of the false heathen gods[4]. It is clear that reasons such as these, whatever their weight, do not rest on the intrinsic evidential force of miracles. And Origen, even more than other early Apologists, strongly emphasizes the subordination of miracles to the evidence of prophecy and to the

[1] Ἐν αἷς [δυνάμεσι] τοὺς πολλοὺς ἔπεισεν ἀκολουθεῖν αὐτῷ ὡς Χριστῷ, Orig. *c. Cels.* i. 38. καὶ γάρ, εἰ χρὴ καὶ τῷ εἰκότι χρῆσθαι λόγῳ περὶ τῆς ἀρχῆθεν Χριστιανῶν συστάσεως, φήσομεν ὅτι οὐ πιθανόν, οὔτε τοὺς Ἰησοῦ ἀποστόλους, ἄνδρας ἀγραμμάτους καὶ ἰδιώτας, ἄλλῳ τινὶ τεθαρρηκέναι πρὸς τὸ καταγγεῖλαι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὸν Χριστιανισμόν, ἢ τῇ δοθείσῃ αὐτοῖς δυνάμει, καὶ τῇ ἐν τῷ λόγῳ εἰς τὰ δηλούμενα πράγματα χάριτι· ἀλλ' οὐδὲ τοὺς ἀκροωμένους αὐτῶν μετατεθεῖσθαι ἐκ πατρίων πολυχρονίων ἐθῶν, μὴ ἀξιολόγου τινὸς δυνάμεως αὐτοὺς καὶ τεραστίων πραγμάτων μετακινησάντων ἐπὶ τὰ οὕτω ξένα καὶ ἀλλότρια τῶν συντρόφων αὐτοῖς δογμάτων, ib. viii. 47; cf. i. 46; ii. 57; iii. 3.

[2] Οὐχὶ καὶ Ἰησοῦς, ἵνα δὴ πιστευθῇ ὑπὸ τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ λαοῦ μεμαθηκότων σημεῖα καὶ τέρατα αἰτεῖν, δεήσεται τοιούτων δυνάμεων, κ.τ.λ., ib. ii. 52.

[3] Ib. ii. 57.

[4] Ib. iii. 3.

test of moral character and moral results. More than once he declares[1] that prophecy is the strongest proof of Christ's claims, for, as Justin Martyr had previously taught, it is the characteristic mark of Deity[2]. And he specially connects miracles with prophecy[3], almost as though their witness to the Divinity of Christ depended upon the witness of God borne to them in prophecy. But even the great Divine testimony of prophecy is made by Origen subordinate to the moral test, and *à fortiori* miracles must also be tried in the same way. Both, he declares[4], are in themselves indifferent; we can only see in them evidences of Divine power when we know

[1] Τὸ *μέγιστον περὶ τῆς συστάσεως τοῦ Ἰησοῦ κεφάλαιον, ὡς ὅτι προεφητεύθη ὑπὸ τῶν παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις προφητῶν, Μωϋσέως καὶ τῶν μετ' αὐτόν, ἢ καὶ πρὸ Μωϋσέως*, Orig. *c. Cels.* i. 49; cf. ii. 28, and the order of the evidences enumerated, iii. 33; viii. 9.

[2] Τὸ *γὰρ χαρακτηρίζον τὴν θεότητα, ἡ περὶ μελλόντων ἐστὶν ἀπαγγελία*, ib. vi. 10; cf. Just. Mart. *Apol.* i. 12 *ὅπερ θεοῦ ἔργον ἐστί, πρὶν ἢ γενέσθαι εἰκεῖν καὶ οὕτως δειχθῆναι γενόμενον ὡς προείρηται.*

[3] *Ὅτι μὲν οὖν χωλοὺς καὶ τυφλοὺς ἐθεράπευσε, διόπερ Χριστὸν αὐτὸν καὶ υἱὸν θεοῦ νομίζομεν, δῆλον ἡμῖν ἐστιν ἐκ τοῦ καὶ ἐν προφητείαις γεγράφθαι*, quoting Isa. xxxv. 5–6. Orig. *c. Cels.* ii. 48. *Ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ γενόμενα παράδοξα, οὐ μαγγανείᾳ, ὡς οἴεται Κέλσος, ἀλλὰ θειότητι προειρημένῃ ὑπὸ τῶν προφητῶν, τὴν ἀπὸ θεοῦ εἶχε μαρτυρίαν*, ib. viii. 9; cf. i. 50.

[4] *Εἴποιμ' ἂν . . . ὅτι εἴπερ μέσον ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν σωμάτων ἰατρική, καὶ πρᾶγμα πίπτον οὐκ εἰς ἀστείους μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ φαύλους, μέσον δὲ καὶ ἡ περὶ τῶν μελλόντων πρόγνωσις—οὐ γὰρ πάντως ἐμφαίνει τὸ ἀστεῖον ὁ προγινώσκων*, ib. iii. 25.

who they are who wield these forces and what are the results of their works [1]. And he claims [2] that the results of Christ's miracles are far greater than the miracles themselves: the material works are judged by the spiritual. They have led to the establishment of the Church, a greater nation than that which Moses founded [3], to the conversion of thousands from sin, to the mighty marvels of meekness and love; and they have had this result because they were the works of One who influenced men less by His miracles than by His Word and His own spotless example [4]. And so, when he sums up the convergent proofs of the Divinity of Christ, Christ's own miracles find no place in the list. They are the churches of the converted, the voice of prophecy concerning Him, the cures

[1] Τοῦ δὲ Ἰησοῦ τὸ ἀνδραγάθημα οὐ κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς τῆς ἐνσωματώσεως μόνους γέγονε χρόνους, ἀλλὰ καὶ μέχρι τοῦ δεῦρο ἡ Ἰησοῦ δύναμίς ἐστιν ἐνεργοῦσα τὴν ἐπιστροφήν, καὶ τὴν βελτίωσιν, ἐν τοῖς πιστεύουσι δι' αὐτοῦ τῷ θεῷ, Orig. *c. Cels.* i. 43; cf. i. 38; ii. 51.

[2] Κατὰ τὴν Ἰησοῦ ἐπαγγελίαν οἱ μαθηταὶ καὶ μείζονα πεποιήκασιν ὧν Ἰησοῦς αἰσθητῶν πεποίηκεν. Ἀεὶ γὰρ ἀνοίγονται ὀφθαλμοὶ τυφλῶν τὴν ψυχήν, κ.τ.λ, ib. ii. 48; cf. ii. 51; iii. 31; viii. 47.

[3] Ib. ii. 52.

[4] Ὁ δὲ δι' ὧν ἐποίει παραδόξων ἐπὶ τὴν τῶν ἠθῶν ἐπανόρθωσιν ἐπαγόμενος, τοὺς θεωροῦντας τὰ γιγνόμενα καλῶς, πῶς οὐκ εἰκός, ὅτι παρεῖχεν ἑαυτὸν οὐ μόνον τοῖς γνησίοις αὐτοῦ μαθηταῖς, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς παράδειγμα ἀρίστου βίου; ἵνα καὶ . . . οἱ λοιποί, πλέον διδαχθέντες ἀπὸ τοῦ λόγου καὶ ἤθους, ἢ καὶ τῶν παραδόξων ὡς χρὴ βιοῦν, πάντα πράττωσι κατ' ἀναφορὰν τοῦ ἀρέσκειν τῷ ἐπὶ πᾶσι θεῷ, ib. i. 68.

wrought, not by Him, but in His Name, the wisdom and knowledge manifested in Him, and the profound truths which a spiritual insight can discover in the Scriptures[1].

So far Origen teaches what his predecessors taught, what our Lord and His Apostles taught. Miracles have evidential force, but it is of an inferior kind. The true proofs of Christianity are moral and spiritual. But it will be noticed that he does not, like Tertullian and Irenaeus, lay stress on the revelation of the Logos, the creative Word, by means of the visible works of Christ. Here is a defect in Origen's teaching which impairs the value of his treatment of miracles. In his hands they are in danger of becoming mere signs, unconnected with the character and functions of the Lord who worked them. The fact is that Origen was confronted with a new difficulty, and he went the wrong way to meet it. For the first time in the history of Christianity miracles, so far from being a convincing proof, were used as an argument against the Gospel. Hitherto it had been easy to refute the charge that they were due to magic, and Origen himself refutes it. But Celsus advanced a more subtle and more enduring objection.

[1] Orig. *c. Cels.* iii. 33.

God, he argued, cannot will anything contrary to nature, and such a miracle as the Resurrection is contrary to nature[1]. In his immediate answer to this, Origen shows his grasp of the highest principles of religious philosophy. God, he agrees[2], will do nothing *contrary* to nature, but He may go *beyond* nature, in the usual sense of the term. He is not bounded by our experience or by our preconceived ideas of what He ought to do, and to bestow a higher life upon man is within His power and His purposes. Here again we must look at the moral character of the

[1] Ποῖον γὰρ σῶμα πάντη διαφθαρὲν οἷόν τε ἐπανελθεῖν εἰς τὴν ἐξ ἀρχῆς φύσιν; οὐδὲν ἔχοντες ἀποκρίνασθαι, καταφεύγουσιν εἰς ἀτοπωτάτην ἀναχώρησιν, ὅτι πᾶν δυνατὸν τῷ θεῷ. Ἀλλ' οὔτι γε τὰ αἰσχρὰ ὁ θεὸς δύναται, οὐδὲ τὰ παρὰ φύσιν βούλεται, Orig. *c. Cels.* v. 14.

[2] Οὐκ εἰς ἀτοπωτάτην γε ἀναχώρησιν ἀναχωροῦμεν, λέγοντες ὅτι πᾶν δυνατὸν τῷ θεῷ· οἴδαμεν γὰρ ἀκούειν τοῦ πᾶν, οὐκ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀνυπάρκτων, οὐδ' ἐπὶ τῶν ἀδιανοήτων. Φαμὲν δὲ καί, ὅτι οὐ δύναται αἰσχρὰ ὁ θεός, ἐπεὶ ἔσται ὁ θεὸς δυνάμενος μὴ εἶναι θεός· εἰ γὰρ αἰσχρόν τι δρᾷ ὁ θεός, οὐκ ἔστι θεός. Ἐπεὶ δὲ τίθησιν, ὅτι καὶ τὰ παρὰ φύσιν ὁ θεὸς οὐ βούλεται, διαστελλόμεθα τὸ λεγόμενον· ὅτι εἰ μὲν παρὰ φύσιν τις τὴν κακίαν λέγει, καὶ ἡμεῖς λέγομεν, ὅτι οὐ βούλεται τὰ παρὰ φύσιν ὁ θεός, οὔτε τὰ ἀπὸ κακίας, οὔτε τὰ ἀλόγως γινόμενα· εἰ δὲ τὰ κατὰ λόγον θεοῦ καὶ βούλησιν αὐτοῦ γινόμενα, ἀναγκαίως εὐθέως εἶναι μὴ παρὰ φύσιν· οὐ παρὰ φύσιν τὰ πραττόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ, κἂν παράδοξα ᾖ, ἃ δοκοῦντά τισι παράδοξα. Εἰ δὲ χρὴ βεβιασμένως ὀνόμασαι· ἐροῦμεν, ὅτι ὡς πρὸς τὴν κοινοτέραν νοουμένην φύσιν ἐστί τινα ὑπὲρ τὴν φύσιν, ἃ ποιήσαι ἄν ποτε θεός, ὑπὲρ τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην φύσιν ἀναβιβάζων τὸν ἄνθρωπον, καὶ ποιῶν αὐτὸν μεταβάλλειν ἐπὶ φύσιν κρείττονα καὶ θειοτέραν· καὶ τηρῶν τοιοῦτον, ὅσον καὶ ὁ τηρούμενος δι' ὧν πράττει παρίστησιν ὅτι βούλεται, ib. v. 23.

works in question, for, as Origen declares in words which Celsus had employed and which modern Apologists would have done well to remember, 'He is not the God of discordant desires or of misguided confusion, but of a well-ordered and righteous nature, seeing that He is the primal Author of all that is good[1].'

But though Origen here lays his finger on a principle that has been of vast importance in Christian thought, his treatment of the difficulty on the whole is not satisfactory. It is vitiated by the defect I have mentioned. In view of the new objection to Christianity, that miracles are against nature, it is not enough to draw the distinction between *παρὰ φύσιν* and *ὑπὲρ φύσιν*, between what is against and what is beyond nature: the objector will need to be satisfied that there is a sufficient reason why God, if He is not the God of blind confusion, should transgress in any sense the order of nature. This Origen could not do, for he had relinquished the real clue to the difficulty. He did not see in miracles the works of the creative Word, who in the beginning had made all things and who

[1] *Συμφήσομεν ὅτι οὐκ ἔστι τῆς πλημμελοῦς ὀρέξεως, οὐδὲ τῆς πεπλανημένης ἀκοσμίας, ἀλλὰ τῆς ὀρθῆς καὶ δικαίας φύσεως ὁ θεύς, ἅτε ἀρχηγέτης τυγχάνων παντὸς καλοῦ*, Orig. *c. Cels.* v. 24.

by His miracles re-created and restored what sin had marred. And thus he bequeathed to his successors a method which has led them away from the true line of apology. As we may see even in Augustine, though in him it is combined with the truth of Christ's revelation as the creative Word, too much stress has been laid on the intrinsic evidence of miracles as transgressions of our experience, and their dependence on the character and functions of Christ has been to some extent forgotten. It is true that St. Augustine, who far more than Origen was confronted by the difficulty of believing that God could act contrary to nature, meets it by a profound restatement and development of Origen's position that miracles are contrary only to the known course of nature, not to nature in its essence[1]. It is true also that he teaches that miracles were necessitated by human sin, to restore the knowledge of God which man had lost by sin; and that he ascribes them to God the Word who created the universe[2]. He never wearies of calling atten-

[1] *De Civit. Dei* XXI. viii. 'Voluntas tanti utique conditoris conditae rei cuiusque natura est. Portentum ergo fit non contra naturam, sed contra quam est nota natura.'

[2] Cf. *De Vera Relig.* ch. l. 98. *In Ioh. Evang. Tractat.* VIII. 1 'Sed quia homines in aliud intenti perdiderunt considerationem

tion to the greater marvels of creation, 'the standing miracle of this visible world'; and these 'earlier miracles God wrought by His Word who was God abiding with Him: the later miracles He wrought by the same Word incarnate and made Man for us[1].' A profound and Scriptural theory of miracles is therefore to be found in Augustine; but it is held along with other opinions which weaken its force. His theory of natural laws left room for events absolutely preternatural, i. e. dependent only on God's will without any antecedent cause implanted, even secretly, in nature[2], and thus led to that view of miracles as interruptions of the

operum Dei, in qua darent laudem quotidie Creatori; tanquam servavit sibi Deus inusitata quaedam quae faceret, ut tanquam dormientes homines ad se colendum mirabilius excitaret . . . Idem tamen Deus Pater Domini nostri Iesu Christi per verbum suum facit omnia haec, et regit qui creavit. Priora miracula fecit per verbum suum Deum apud se: posteriora miracula fecit per ipsum verbum suum, incarnatum, et propter nos hominem factum.'

[1] *In Ioh. Evang. Tractat.* VIII. 1; cf. also Ep. 137, § 14 'Arbitror enim talia flagitari, qualia gerens hominem, facere non debuit. Nam in principio erat verbum . . . et per ipsum omnia facta sunt. Num homine assumpto, alium mundum facere debuit, ut eum esse crederemus, per quem factus est mundus?'

[2] Cf. *De Genesi ad Litt.* vi. 29; ix. 32–33 'Habet ergo Deus in seipso absconditas quorundam factorum causas, quas rebus conditis non inseruit; easque implet non illo opere providentiae, quo naturas substituit ut sint, sed illo quo eas administrat ut voluerit, quas ut voluit condidit.'

order of nature which has confused modern apology. And by assigning as the essential object of miracles that they were to excite attention, i.e. as he often explains, to arouse wonder by their mere singularity [1], he induced men to neglect the revelation conveyed by the character of these works and to think exclusively of their intrinsic marvellousness. 'In such matters,' he says [2], 'the whole reason of the thing is the power of Him who does it.' Thus miracles were made to depend on the mere power of God, and their sole purpose was held to be to excite wonder. In a word, the influence of Augustine led men to dwell on the evidential force of miracles rather than on the revelation of which they are but a part. But, I must repeat, this would be by no means a fair representation of his own view: it gives but one side of his whole theory of miracles. For on the whole Augustine's doctrine coincides with

[1] Cf. *Ep. ad Euodium*, 162, § 6, 7; Sermo CCXLVII. § 2 'ubi defecerit ratio, ibi est fidei aedificatio . . . Nescis nihil esse impossibile Deo?' Cf. *In Ioh. Ev. Tractat.* XXIV. 1 'Secundum ipsam suam misericordiam servavit sibi quaedam, quae faceret opportuno tempore praeter usitatum cursum ordinemque naturae, ut non maiora, sed insolita videndo stuperent, quibus quotidiana viluerant . . . Illud mirantur homines non quia maius est, sed quia rarum est.'

[2] *Epist.* 137, § 8.

that of his great predecessors. Like them he makes miracles dependent on prophecy, and subordinate to the test of moral purpose and moral character[1]. When confronted with the alleged miracles of the Donatists he did not hesitate to declare that he accepted miracles on the faith of the Catholic Church, not the Catholic Church on the faith of miracles. For our Lord, he adds, even after the Resurrection, when He was able to show His disciples the miracle of His risen Body, yet rather referred them to the witness of the prophets as the supreme evidence of Him[2]. And even the greatest of Christ's miracles is nothing in comparison with the revelation of His character. 'He does not say, Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, because I raise one who has been four days dead, and expel evil spirits and diseases from the bodies of men; but He says, Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart[3].' Thus St. Augustine, if his

[1] In the very passage in which he lays stress on the singularity of miracles as exciting wonder, he adds the appeal to their teaching about Christ. 'Nec tamen sufficit haec intueri in miraculis Christi. Interrogemus ipsa miracula, quid nobis loquantur de Christo: habent enim si intelligantur linguam suam,' *In Ioh. Ev. Tractat.* XXIV. 2.

[2] *De unitate Ecclesiae*, cc. 49, 50.

[3] *Expositio Epistolae ad Galatas*, c. 15.

treatment of them is considered as a whole, is seen to appeal to miracles very much as our Lord and His Apostles, and as the great early Apologists appealed to them; although the subject had been, by his time, entangled in difficulties which confused and sometimes misled his teaching.

But the Patristic method of regarding miracles is best represented, and with the least admixture of a false theory, by St. Athanasius: for to him they appear as necessary elements in the Incarnation, and are treated by him in relation to it. They stand, that is, in close connexion with all the various means by which God reveals Himself to man. The original source of the knowledge of God was the nature of man himself, made in the image of God: a secondary source was the works of God in the Creation. But that men, being weak and heedless, might learn also from men, He gave them the law and the prophets, who became for the whole world 'a sacred school of the knowledge of God[1].' But these means also were neglected; and therefore the Word of God Himself, the very Word by whom all things were created, took human nature 'in order that through the

[1] *De Incarn.* c. 12.

deeds wrought by Him in the body the Word of God might be known, and through Him the Father[1].' Miracles, therefore, being part of the deeds wrought by the Word in the body, are essentially relative to the purpose of the Incarnation, viz. to the revelation of God through the creative Logos. Thus the miracles are evidences because they display the character of the Creator. 'As, being invisible, He is known by the works of the creation; so, being made Man, and not seen, as God, in the body, He would have it known by His works that He who performs them is not man but the power of God and the Word of God[2].' When St. Athanasius therefore 'marshals the great miracles of our Lord's ministry and life into one long evidential array[3],' he does so in order to show how this creative character is stamped upon them, and how men were led by them to 'look up' to the Father and learn of Him. The process of conviction was to reason from the partial providence revealed in the miracles to the universal providence of the Creator or Sustainer of the world[4]. And it was necessary

[1] *De Incarn.* c. 14. [2] Ib. 18.

[3] Mozley, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 196.

[4] *Athan. de Inc.* 19 *ταῦτα δὲ πάντα ποιεῖν τῷ σωτῆρι καλῶς ἔχειν ἐδόκει· ἵν' ἐπειδὴ τὴν ἐν τοῖς πᾶσιν αὐτοῦ πρόνοιαν ἠγνόησαν οἱ ἄνθρωποι,*

that these should be works of redemption, and not a mere word as in the Creation, because not a fresh creation but the healing of what was created was needed. The creative Word therefore appeared as the Physician and Saviour, and His works display Him as exercising this function and office[1]. Thus the evidential force of miracles is strictly dependent upon their character, not as supernatural, but as beneficent, restorative, regulating, creative, the works of Him who is the only true Lord and God. They are, in short, the revelation of God, not the proof of the revelation. And they are subordinate to prophecy. We infer the Divinity of Christ from His miracles, not because they are specially marvellous, for the Old Testament miracles surpass them, but because they are foretold[2]. Thus the whole Scripture refutes

καὶ οὐ κατενόησαν τὴν διὰ τῆς κτίσεως αὐτοῦ θεότητα, κἂν ἐκ τῶν διὰ τοῦ σώματος ἔργων αὐτοῦ ἀναβλέψωσι, καὶ ἔννοιαν λάβωσι δι' αὐτοῦ τῆς εἰς τὸν πατέρα γνώσεως, ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ μέρος τὴν εἰς τὰ ὅλα αὐτοῦ πρόνοιαν, ὡς προεῖπον, ἀναλογιζόμενοι.

[1] *Athan. de Inc.* 44–45 *ὅτε δὲ γέγονεν ὁ ἄνθρωπος, καὶ χρεία ἀπήντησεν οὐ τὰ μὴ ὄντα ἀλλὰ τὰ γενόμενα θεραπεῦσαι, ἀκόλουθον ἦν ἐν τοῖς ἤδη γενομένοις τὸν ἰατρὸν καὶ σωτῆρα παραγενέσθαι, ἵνα καὶ τὰ ὄντα θεραπεύσῃ . . . οὐκοῦν ἀκολούθως ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος σῶμα ἀνέλαβε, καὶ ἀνθρωπίνῳ ὀργάνῳ κέχρηται, ἵνα καὶ ζωοποιήσῃ τὸ σῶμα, καὶ ἵν' ὥσπερ ἐν τῇ κτίσει διὰ τῶν ἔργων γνωρίζεται, οὕτω καὶ ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ ἐργάσηται, καὶ δείξῃ ἑαυτὸν πανταχοῦ, μηδὲν ἔρημον τῆς ἑαυτοῦ θειότητος καὶ γνώσεως καταλιμπάνων.* [2] Ib. 38.

the unbelief of the Jews. Again, the inferiority of miraculous evidence to that of moral results is indicated with especial force by St. Athanasius. It is true he calls the works of Christ superhuman, *ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον*[1], but he does not mean by that to appeal to their inherently marvellous character as interferences with natural laws. For when he enumerates these superhuman works he passes, with no change of tone, from such miracles as making the blind to see, which reveal the Creator, to spiritual works and the evidence of moral results. The spread of His kingdom on earth, the kingdom of peace and purity, in place of war and lust, is the great miracle to which Athanasius appeals, and in which he traces superhuman power even more clearly than in those works to which we limit the term miraculous[2]. Even our Lord's own Resurrection has to submit to this test: when the Jews disbelieve it Athanasius points to the moral and spiritual results which flow from it. It is proved in that He who died now 'works

[1] *Athan. de Inc.* 48. After pointing out that He whose influence had everywhere destroyed magical arts could be no mere magician, he concludes, *διὰ τοῦτο οὐδὲ ἀνθρώπινά ἐστιν αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔργα, ἀλλ' ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον.*

[2] Ib. 49 *τίνων πώποτε τῶν γενομένων ἀνθρώπων ἡ διδασκαλία ἀπὸ περάτων ἕως περάτων γῆς μία καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ δι' ὅλων ἴσχυσεν, ὥστε διὰ πάσης γῆς τὸ σέβας αὐτοῦ διαπτῆναι ;*

daily, drawing men to godliness, persuading them to virtue, teaching them concerning immortality, leading them to long for heavenly things, revealing the knowledge of the Father, inspiring them with the power which overcomes death, manifesting Himself to each.' And thus 'the Son of God, living and energizing, works daily, and is the active cause of the salvation of all[1].'

Miracles, then, to Athanasius are not external proofs of a revelation, but integral parts of it, manifesting the personal character and office of Him whose works they are. The whole revelation made in Christ must indeed be proved, but it is proved, not by the intrinsic marvellousness of the miracles, but by the correspondence of the whole with the predictions of the prophets, and by the moral results which flowed from it. The special works which we call miracles are thus taken up into a great world-scheme of salvation, stretching from the Creation to the Day of Judgement, the method of God's self-revelation to weak and blinded mankind, culminating indeed in the central act of the Incarnation, but fore-announced and prepared for in the whole course of Jewish history,

[1] *Athan. de Inc.* 31.

and passing onward in the moral results of the new life thereby imparted to all succeeding generations of men. In this scheme miracles have their place as integral parts of the revelation, and in a far lower degree as its evidence; but it is a strictly relative, dependent, and, compared with the whole, a subordinate place [1].

On the whole, then, a survey, slight and imperfect as this has been, of Patristic Apology bears out the conclusions we came to from a study of the Biblical appeal to miracles. No doubt there was a tendency, and an increasing tendency, to regard miracles as exclusively evidential, and to disregard the other proofs of Christianity; but this is not the main apologetic position of the Patristic writers. In general with them, as with the Old Testament writers, with our Lord and His Apostles, miracles are incidents in revelation rather than external proofs of it; they derive their evidential force from their character, from the personality and

[1] Cf. Möhler's *Athanasius*, i. 164, 5 'Es ist gewiss ein sehr geistreicher Gesichtspunkt, aus welchem Athanasius die Wunder auffasste. Er betrachtet sie nicht als mittelbaren Beweis für die Wahrheit der Lehre Christi, sondern als unmittelbare Darstellung, als Offenbarung seiner Gottheit . . . Der Herr der Schöpfung erschien, und zeigte darum nothwendig seine schöpferische Kraft.' For a similar view of our Lord's miracles see Gregory Nyssa, *Orat. Catech.* ch. 12.

teaching of those who work them, and from the results to which they led; and they are almost universally subordinate, as evidence, to the testimony of prophecy. This latter fact suggests a difficulty which all students of Patristic Apology must have felt. In bidding us take prophecy as the main evidence of Christianity, the Fathers offer us a kind of proof which it seems increasingly hard for us to accept. Their method of appealing to prophecy, their minute and strained interpretations of isolated texts, their reliance on doubtful or false translations, their theories of inspiration and of symbolism are discredited with us, and we dare not rest the proof of our faith upon such supports. Now I cannot venture to discuss prophecy in these lectures: but admitting that much of this objection is well grounded, we may yet see in prophecy a main foundation of Christian belief. Apart from the fact that, whatever deductions may have to be made for false and strained interpretations, there remain particular predictions which can apply to no person but Christ, and to no future but that of His Church, and that the improved methods of exegesis only make it harder to reject these prophetic evidences—apart from this, the study of the pre-

paration for Christ in Jewish history, a broad view of the forces which were working towards the great consummation, will convince a reverent inquirer that in a very real sense 'God foreshowed these things by the mouth of all the prophets[1].' The Jewish history, the Mosaic law, the stream of Hebrew prophecy are inexplicable and unintelligible without the culminating revelation of God in Christ. 'To Him bear all the prophets witness[2],' both in particular predictions and in the great general tendency of their thought, in the continuous series of anticipations, hopes, dim surmises, gleams of certainty, visions of glory, which distinguish the history and literature of the chosen race. They constitute a main evidence of Christianity because they 'all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth[3].' Thus we return, by different ways and perhaps with less of undoubting confidence, to the methods of the earliest Christian thinkers, in that like them we can believe that 'the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy[4].'

[1] Acts iii. 18.
[2] Ibid. x. 43.
[3] Heb. xi. 13.
[4] Rev. xix. 10.

IV

Miracles in Relation to Modern Thought

The view of miracles which has commonly been taken by apologetic writers in modern times may fairly be stated thus. Christianity being a special revelation of certain truths which the reason could not discover, or in other words a supernatural revelation, needs the confirmation of supernatural events to prove the truth of the revelation. There are indeed other proofs, but the main and fundamental evidence is that of miracles, which have been wrought in order to prove that the extraordinary and incredible doctrines taught by our Lord and His Apostles were true, and that they, the preachers of these truths, were Divinely-commissioned. Some Apologists, especially those of the last century, would go so far as to say that nothing but miracles could prove the truth of Christianity, and that miracles had no other object than this. It is unnecessary to multiply

quotations in illustration of this view of miracles; but I may refer to two or three of the most eminent apologetic writers of different periods. The greatest of all English Apologists, Bishop Butler, describes Christianity as 'the republication of natural religion,' i. e. of certain religious and moral truths, and also as 'containing an account of a dispensation of things not discoverable by reason,' i. e. of the Incarnation and other facts which are connected with the 'recovery and salvation of mankind.' Of this revelation, which is itself miraculous, 'miracles are the proof': i. e. 'the publishers of the revelation proved their commission from' God, 'by making it appear that He had entrusted them with a power of suspending and changing the general laws of nature[1].' Such was the view of revelation and of miracles with which the greatest Christian philosopher of the age confronted the Deists. Rather more than a generation later a similar position was adopted, but with far less caution, by Paley. Revelation, in his sense of the word, is 'a message from God, conveying intelligence of a future state of rewards and punishments, and teaching mankind how to prepare themselves for that state'; and

[1] *Analogy*, Pt. II. ch. 1, 2.

it is inconceivable that a revelation could be made except by miracles[1]. On these premises Paley bases the whole of his *Evidences of Christianity*; though he admits to an auxiliary and subordinate place as evidence such things as prophecy, the morality of the Gospel, and the progress and influence of Christianity in the world. In our own day substantially the same view has been taken by one of the acutest of Christian apologetic and moral writers. Mozley rests his defence of miracles on their necessity as the proof of a revelation, and revelation is, in his sense, the communication of 'something which we could not know without it[2].' It is true he admits that the 'structure of evidence is a mixed one,' including prophecy, the spread of Christianity, its moral results, and so forth[3]; and he gives to these 'collateral proofs' more weight than Paley had given, though less, I think, than Bishop Butler. But after all, the principal evidence is miracles, and on that supposition his exhaustive defence of them is based.

To criticize such great divines as those I have mentioned is an audacious undertaking,

[1] *Evidences*, Preparatory Considerations.
[2] *Bampton Lectures*, p. 5 (ed. 1878). [3] Ib. p. 209.

and I certainly should not venture upon it on *a priori* grounds. But it will be seen on a scrutiny of their works that they have deduced their theory of the evidential force of miracles rather from an assumption of what must be than from what actually was the method of revelation and of the promulgation of Christianity. Mozley, for instance, gives us no historical proof of his assertion that 'miracles are the direct credentials of a revelation: the visible supernatural is the appropriate witness to the invisible supernatural[1]'; and that 'Christianity is believed upon its miraculous evidence[2].' Nor does Paley support by any appeal to the actual course of facts his assumption that a revelation can only be made by miracles. It is just this appeal to the historical facts of the case that I have tried to make in the foregoing lectures. Whatever *a priori* assumptions it may be natural to make about the evidence of a revelation, and the grounds upon which Christianity is believed, as a matter of fact we have seen that neither by the Old Testament writers, nor by our Lord and His Apostles, nor by the earliest Apologists and defenders of the faith was revelation primarily based on the evidence of

[1] *Bampton Lectures*, p. 15. [2] Ib. p. 21.

miracles: that in the New Testament that evidence is continually and systematically placed on an inferior level, and the demand for it is declared to be sinful; and that by the greatest of the Patristic writers the appeal to miracles is so qualified and limited as to suggest the question, Has Christianity ever been believed on the evidence of miracles alone? Further, we have seen that the Old Testament miracles occurred, not 'in order to prove a particular dispensation of Providence,' but as part of the series of events which constituted that dispensation, as means whereby God's purposes for Israel were carried out: that the miracles of the New Testament are to be regarded as the necessary consequences of the Divine Life which came into the world at the Incarnation and was continued by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit: and that the true view of miracles is that which the Fathers maintain, that the Word of God, having entered into the world which He made, exerted there, in consequence of human sin, creative and restorative energies by which He not only revealed afresh the nature of God but imparted new life to the dying race of men.

We are thus led by the facts themselves to

a position which is in strong contrast to the usual treatment of miracles by modern Apologists. And the difference rests, not on a different view of miracles alone, but on a different conception of the Christian revelation. To put it shortly, the view of such a writer as Paley is that Christianity is the revelation of certain doctrines, to us it is rather the revelation of a Person; that is to say, in the one conception it is looked upon as information: in the other, as a fact. Bishop Butler, with his usual caution, leaves room for this view of Christianity as a fact, or rather a series of facts; but much of his language gives a different impression, and when his words are expanded and commented on by Mozley, they are explained so as to conform to Mozley's own view. Thus when Butler speaks of 'invisible miracles, the Incarnation of Christ, for instance, . . . which require themselves to be proved by visible miracles[1],' Mozley, partly quoting Butler's words, changes them thus: '"The invisible miracle," i.e. the doctrine of the Incarnation, he says, "requires to be proved by visible miracles[2]."' The change is most significant. It means the change of Christianity from a series of Divine acts to

[1] *Analogy*, Pt. II. ch. 2. [2] *Bampton Lectures*, p. 191.

a series of Divine communications, or as Paley crudely puts it, to 'a message from God, conveying intelligence of a future state of rewards and punishments.' Such a description of Christianity could not be given had the significance of miracles been rightly gathered from a study of the historical circumstances of their occurrence. The history of God's dealings with Israel is, indeed, accompanied by a progressive revelation of His character, or rather it produced such a revelation; but it was far more than that. So again the New Testament history contains a revelation of God: in the Person of Christ man learnt to see God. But the Incarnation was far more than a revelation: it was the culminating point of the process by which God entered into revelation with man, redeemed him and sanctified him; it was the imparting of a new life to the world. It is therefore as a series of events that Christianity must primarily be regarded; the doctrines in which those events are declared and their significance explained are secondary elements in the religion. It may be said that Christianity is called a revelation of doctrines because the apprehension of the facts, in other words, assent to the doctrines, is essential to a reception of

the benefits conveyed by the facts. That may or may not be true; at least this is not the occasion to discuss the possible extension of the redemption wrought by Christ to those who never heard of Him or of any Christian doctrine. But even if it were true it could not be said that the doctrines are of the primary essence of Christianity. Before and above them must stand the facts, the historical dealings of God with mankind, from which the doctrines are deduced: and therefore to understand any of the elements of Christianity they must be regarded primarily in relation to those Divine dealings, to the historical facts of the manifestation of God to the Jewish or to the Christian Church. Miracles, therefore, which form a most important part of the events which are included in the term Christianity, must first and foremost be considered in relation to the whole historical series of events, and not to the doctrines based on them, or to the process of belief in them. It is, in the abstract, conceivable that the whole series of events might have occurred—that man might have fallen, the chosen race been preserved and guided through its history, at the time appointed the Word of God might have become flesh and dwelt among us, He might

have lived and died and risen again, and the Holy Spirit might have been bestowed—without any communication from God to convey a knowledge of all this. It is, in short, conceivable that belief might not have been required of man; but even in that case the miracles, or at least the greater part of them, would still have occurred, for they are related, not primarily to the belief of man, but to the work of God in the world. But this is, of course, a purely hypothetical manner of stating the case. In point of fact, at each stage in the process of salvation a revelation accompanied it, and that revelation was made in part through the special acts which we call miracles, which are thus seen to be events connected with the personal action of God in the world, and pre-eminently with that moment in the history of God's action when He took our nature upon Him and dwelt among us.

Here, however, it may be asked, Is there any practical difference between the two contrasted views? Whether miracles are regarded as designed to prove certain truths beyond human reason to discover, or as necessary results and accompaniments of the special Presence of God in the world, in either case

they *are* proofs of revelation; for when we see the necessary result of an event we infer that the event occurred. When we see, or are convinced of, the miracle, we infer the Presence of God causing it; and it matters not whether we hold that the miracle was intended to produce in us that inferential belief, or had other purposes. It does produce the belief, it is evidential, and that is enough for us. On closer inspection, however, the difference seems to be fundamental. In the first place, if we regard miracles as primarily designed to be evidences of religious truth, we necessarily look mainly, if not exclusively, at their preternatural character. In order to prove the truth of an assertion which human reason could not discover, a superhuman event, it is said, is necessary. Whatever else then the miracle may be, it must be a marvel, beyond all human experience and human power. And if it is a superhuman marvel, it need be nothing further. It need not be beneficent or instructive; as even St. Augustine said, it need have no further *ratio* than the power of Him who works it. This view of miracles therefore tends to make us see in them works of mere power. On the other hand, the Scriptural account of

miracles leads us to look in them, as in the whole series of Divine works, for a revelation of the character and purposes of God. This explains the astonishing difference between the true evangelical miracles and those of the Apocryphal Gospels, which is one of the great proofs of the authenticity of the New Testament. It was, again, the neglect of this view that led to the invention of the later ecclesiastical miracles with their characteristics of mere power and marvellousness. But it has also a very important bearing on the religious thought of our own days. As the theory of evidence is generally stated it would seem as though a Person had appeared in the world, had declared Himself to be commissioned by God to make certain communications about God and His own relation to Him, and, in proof of what He said, had raised the dead and walked on the waters. There is no necessary connexion between the two things, the doctrine and the proof of it, except the assumed supernatural character of both[1]. The doctrine, it is said, cannot be discovered by human reason, the works cannot be accomplished by human power. If then there

[1] This lies at the root of Matthew Arnold's objection, discussed by Gore, *Bampton Lectures*, p. 48.

arises any reason to think that the miracles are not necessarily supernatural, the whole proof falls to the ground; and with the proof the doctrine also is discredited. This is not generally admitted. It has often been argued that so long as certain events were thought at the time to be supernatural, it does not matter whether they really were so or not. They did their work in producing conviction among those who witnessed them. But if miracles were intended to be proofs of the revelation a supernatural character is essential to them. However long afterwards they may be ascertained to have been accomplished by natural and human forces, their efficacy as evidence is destroyed, for that efficacy—according to the theory we are discussing—rests wholly on their supernatural character. Therefore, to limit the evidence of Christianity to miracles alone, and to limit miracles to the function of evidence alone, is to leave in perpetual uncertainty both the miraculous character of the proof of religion and the religion itself.

If, however, miracles are held to be not superhuman proofs of revelation, but parts of God's dealings with man, accompaniments of His Presence on earth, this difficulty does not arise.

For the whole analogy of revelation shows that God may be manifested and His character displayed by purely natural means. The Old Testament writers found Him in the normal processes of nature, and even the events which we call, and which apparently were really miraculous, are placed by them on a level with other marks of God's favour to Israel which were in no sense miraculous. Whether the waters of the Red Sea were driven back by the direct intervention of the Almighty, or by a normal combination of natural causes, at all events His people were thereby preserved, and were convinced of His favour towards them. In the same way nothing can destroy the force of Christ's miracles of healing regarded as an element in His general work of beneficence. It may be proved that at other epochs also, and in presence of other striking personalities, the sick were healed and evil spirits cast out. If so, those who base their belief on the unique and supernatural character of Christ's miracles would lose that support of their faith; but it would not affect those who see in these events a Divine revelation of love, and a necessary result of His Presence who is Love.

But although the supernatural character of

Christ's works is not essential to their purpose and mode of occurrence, we need not assume that they were not supernatural. It may be true that works similar in kind to the New Testament miracles of healing meet us elsewhere in our experience: it is, as I have already said, almost certain that they occurred in the early ages of the Church; they may have occurred at other times and in wholly different conditions; they may be occurring now. But a candid inquirer must admit that the New Testament miracles in their number, in the ease and certainty with which they were performed, as well as in their close correspondence with the claims of Christ and with the revelation which He made, were far beyond anything then or since experienced. He did continually what men do occasionally, instantaneously what they do slowly, with royal ease what they do with effort and difficulty. The works of Christ may only be different in degree from other works, but in such a matter a difference of degree really amounts to a difference in kind. Therefore we may assert that His healings were in truth miraculous, not because they were *per se* supernatural, but because of the manner, the conditions, the period in which they were accomplished. We may know of similar

works, as the Jews knew of similar exorcisms: nevertheless, to us, as to the Jews, the works of Christ appeal with a fresh and unique power. 'What is this? a new teaching! with authority He commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him[1].' 'It was never so seen in Israel[2].'

Such, then, is the Biblical view of miracles, and such are some of the results of that view on our general theory as to the evidences of religion. Now it may seem as though miracles were thereby degraded from their proper position, and were made unnecessary excrescences in Christianity. It is true that we can hardly accept some of the reasons commonly given for their necessity. Miracles, it is said, are necessary because Christian doctrine is supernatural, and a supernatural doctrine can only be proved by a supernatural fact. But many of the great doctrines of natural religion required no miracle to prove them, and yet they are surely supernatural. Men have accepted the doctrines of the Creation and the direct providence of God without any miraculous evidence. Why should it be more impossible to believe in the Incarnation, the union of God with man in Christ, than

[1] Mark i. 27. [2] Matt. ix. 33.

in the Creation, the contact of God with matter? To a Gnostic the one was quite as inconceivable as the other; yet no miracles were wrought, so far as we know, to prove that God created the world. Again, the necessity of miracles is asserted on the ground that revelation is undiscoverable by reason, and therefore God must declare it and support the declaration by miracles. There seems to be some confusion here. The Christian revelation is the revelation of a Person. In one sense, of course, such a revelation is undiscoverable by the reason. No such fact as that of the Incarnation, the appearance of a certain Person in the world, can be discovered by us before it happens; but we can apprehend and verify it when it has happened[1]. By reason and faith we can accept the Person of Christ as Divine, just as we can accept any other historical fact which we could not have discovered for ourselves, and we accept it on the ground of the total impression produced by that Person. It is not the miracles of Christ that are unique, for, as we have seen, similar miracles have occurred, and according to our Lord's own statement they might occur by Satanic agency:

[1] Cf. Westcott, *Gospel of Life*, p. 225: 'Our power of discovery is not a measure of our power of recognition.'

it is the character of Christ that is unique, and from that character, taken in relation to the claims He made, the impression He produced, the anticipations that went before His birth, the results that flowed from His life and death, we infer that this Man was, as He said, the Son of God.

We do not then assert that miracles are necessary to revelation because a supernatural doctrine can only be proved by a supernatural fact, or because revelation is undiscoverable by the reason, and therefore needs the proof of miracles. We do not, indeed, take upon ourselves to assert that miracles are necessary at all to the accomplishment of God's purposes. We dare not set bounds to His Almighty wisdom, and declare either that miracles cannot have happened, or that they must have happened. All that we can venture to say is that, having happened, they have revealed to us something of the character and purposes of God. And in tracing this out we shall do best to follow the guidance of the great Patristic writers who saw in the miracles one of many indications that the same Word who created had come to redeem the world, and that He revealed Himself by creative acts. Such acts,

so far as we can see, must flow from the Presence of the Incarnate Logos in the world: they present themselves as the inevitable and inherent results of His Personality. And they correspond exactly to the revelation of God which is made through nature and in the Bible. God is revealed to us as in nature, and yet distinct from it. On the one hand, bare Deism is excluded, the Deism which contemplates God only as the Creator and not as the Sustainer of the universe. The Bible, and indeed the highest religious consciousness generally, declares that He ordained and that He also controls the forces of nature and the laws by which they act. But on the other hand, revelation also excludes Pantheism, for that identifies God with nature, not in the sense that all which is expresses His will, but as though He had no independent existence. Pantheism sees God in all natural forces and events, and maintains that His whole Being is exhausted in these. But to the true religious consciousness God, though always and everywhere present and working in man and in nature, is always felt as distinct from them. And this twofold conception of God is corroborated by the miracles of the Bible. They are, on the one hand, wholly beyond our

experience, they reveal a power outside the ordinary working of nature's laws, and they connect that power with purposes which are declared to us by certain specially enlightened and inspired religious teachers. Miracles therefore proclaim that He is not identical with the forces and laws which He thus controls for His own purposes. He is manifested as transcending the agencies which He Himself has created, but transcending them in no arbitrary and lawless fashion, but according to the highest and most unchanging of all laws, the law of His will and His wisdom[1]. But on the other hand, though the action of God in miracles is thus extraordinary, it is on the lines, so to speak, of the ordinary. It is not a reversal, but the continuance of those laws which we can trace in the sphere of our experience. If nature, as the Gnostics held, were indeed evil and the work of an evil power, miracles being Divine would contradict and counterwork the laws by which nature is held together. But nature is not evil: it is from God, and expresses His will. Therefore miracles, though they are results of a law

[1] Cf. Augustine 'Neque enim potentia temeraria, sed sapiente virtute omnipotens est: et hoc de unaquaque re in tempore suo facit, quod ante in ea fecit ut possit.'

of which we have no other experience, show us that law working in conformity with the great principles of God's general government of the universe. For example, it is conceivable that miracles might make nature triumph over man, matter over spirit. This would be a reversal of the great principle which runs through the history of the human race, in which man is seen gradually rising supreme over nature, and spirit learning to control and subdue matter. Therefore the Scriptural miracles, instead of contradicting, take up this principle and carry it on beyond the limits of our ordinary experience, and give us an insight into it which we cannot get from the normal conditions of life, distorted as they are by sin: but miracles do this by raising and perfecting those conditions, not by violating them. The relation of God's miraculous action in the world to the normal conditions of the world and man, is analogous to the relation of Christ's sinless humanity to the nature which man has degraded by sin. Christ's humanity is not a different and an alien thing[1]: it is the perfection, not the reversal of what man is. So

[1] Cf. Augustine, *Ep. ad Volusianum*, Ep. 137, iii. 9 'Nunc vero ita inter Deum et homines mediator apparuit, ut in unitate personae copulans utranque naturam, et solita sublimaret insolitis, et insolita solitis temperaret.'

in His miraculous action God carries natural conditions to a higher point of perfection, and for a moment repairs the ravages of sin and the shortcomings of human weakness and ignorance. Christ in His miracles lifts the veil of the future, and shows what man will be. As in the Resurrection, so in all His mighty works, He is revealed as the Firstfruits, the 'First-born from the dead[1],' displaying the visible results of the conquest over sin and death.

The reverse of this is the case with those Satanic and magical marvels which human superstition has invented or which the forces of evil have been allowed to work. They make nature triumph over man, bringing him into subjection, by panic-terror, to the blind forces of the universe: or else, being reversals of nature, they afford to man no guiding principles, but shatter his belief in a reign of law and in the supremacy of God's most holy will.

Miracles, then, are on the lines of God's general government of the world in that they exemplify the triumph of man over nature. But above all they illustrate the great principle which faith indeed apprehends, but which is but dimly shown in the normal course of history: the

[1] Rev. i. 5.

principle of the victory of good over evil. We see enough, but only enough, of it in experience to believe, but only to believe, that it is a ruling principle; and then comes the revelation of God's will in miracles, and shows us the same principle at work in regions beyond our ordinary experience. The forces which miracles defeat are the forces of evil—weakness and disease and death and sin; the miraculous power is exerted on the side of good, and this constitutes the great test of all such powers. 'How can one enter into the house of a strong man and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man?' 'If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the kingdom of God come upon you[1].'

Against such considerations as these, which support the Christian belief in the miracles of revelation, it is maintained that this is an unworthy belief, the product of less advanced ages, and that it is dying out with the growth of enlightenment. Now we may agree that miracles have often been presented under an aspect which makes them unworthy of acceptance. If miracles are designed only as proofs to compel, or even strongly to induce, belief in doctrines

[1] Matt. xii. 28, 29.

otherwise incredible, it seems unworthy of a rational being to accept them. It is a direct appeal to an instinct which tends, and rightly tends, to die out as men grow in knowledge and enlightenment. But we have seen that this is not the appeal made by the Christian miracles. The doctrines of which they form part are not incredible without them, though we may readily grant—indeed it is one of our main contentions—that the miracles help to throw light on the doctrines, i. e. they help us to understand the character and the dealings of God. Take Christianity as a whole and it is seen to be eminently credible; in other words, it corresponds to the highest faculties by which man apprehends truth. Miracles as one factor in the Christian revelation are rendered worthy of our belief by their relation to the whole series of events by means of which God redeemed and enlightened the world. Take them out of the revelation and make them a mere external evidence of it by virtue of their supernatural character alone, and they are unworthy of acceptance by men who believe in a God of law.

Or again, belief in miracles is unworthy if they were produced by a childish love of marvels as

such, or were designed to appeal to it. But nothing is more striking in the Gospels, and indeed in the Bible as a whole, than the stern repression of the tendency to rely on mere marvels. Those who talk of the unworthiness of belief in miracles probably hold that the miracles of the Old Testament gradually and naturally developed into those of the Rabbinical legends, and the miracles of the New Testament into the absurd fables of the Apocryphal Gospels, and that if the one class is unworthy of rational belief, so is the other. But, on the contrary, it is no development but a complete transformation. It is impossible to exaggerate the vast difference in character between the Christian miracles and those which the thaumaturgic instinct has invented. The Apocryphal Gospels afford one of the most powerful proofs of the historical truth of the New Testament narrative for they display in the most striking form the difference between miracles which are unworthy and miracles which are worthy of rational belief: and they also witness to the strength of that disposition to invent purposeless prodigies which was kept in check by the power of our Lord's personality and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

Again, the objection that belief in miracles is unworthy rests on the assumption that miracles are violations of law. If so, I for one could not defend them. The highest man is he whose actions are most in accordance with law; to believe therefore that God's most special and personal acts are lawless is to make Him inferior to our highest conceptions of human character. But though the craving for what is wholly abnormal, for violations of natural law, is unworthy, it is surely not unworthy to welcome the manifestation of a hitherto unknown law. It is the belief in law in general which is admirable, not the limitation of that belief to those laws which we happen at present to know. More and more are we advancing to a realization of the universal reign of law; and if the belief in miracles were an interruption to that advance, it would indeed be an unworthy, even a barbarous thing. But in the Scriptural and Patristic conception of miracles they rather form an additional evidence that God does nothing irrationally or at random, and that His acts are governed by that all-embracing law which is His eternal and immutable wisdom, and into the fuller knowledge of which His children are being gradually led.

But there is another, more common difficulty as to miracles. Had they ever occurred, it is held, they would occur now; but miracles do not happen. Now the force of this objection clearly depends on the extent to which the alleged Biblical miracles lead us to expect the frequent recurrence of similar events. But, as we have seen, if the whole Bible period be taken, miracles are found to be strikingly rare. On this ground alone there is not only no reason to expect miracles in any given period of history, but a very strong reason not to expect them. Further, if it be remembered that the Biblical miracles, few as they are, are always dependent on some Providential purpose, it may be inferred that we ought not to expect miracles to happen, unless they are needed. Whether they are needed, or when they will be needed, it is absolutely impossible for beings such as we are to know. They are God's acts, dependent wholly on His purposes, and therefore out of our ken. The objection really, however, rests upon that view of miracles as primarily evidential in their purpose, which we have seen reason to reject. No doubt it is as necessary now as it has ever been that men should believe in Christ, and if the purpose of miracles is to

produce belief in Christ, then they ought to be occurring now. But if this is a false view of their nature and object, there is no rational ground for maintaining that because miracles do not happen now, therefore they never happened. I do not, however, wish to admit that miracles do not happen. The question is one of evidence, which it is impossible to discuss here. It may be that such phenomena as the so-called 'faith-healing' so far resemble the healings of the New Testament as to be fairly called miracles: in which case it would become a question whether such phenomena were necessary accompaniments of true Christianity, or whether our Lord's parting promise to His disciples as to the 'signs that should follow those that believe[1]' is to be understood only of the earliest generation of Christians. These are debateable matters, of which we can only now say that they certainly cannot be decided by the unproved assertion, however confidently made, that 'miracles do not happen.' But the doubt only applies to physical and external miracles. The whole tenor of the Bible assures us that spiritual works, the energies of God in the heart and soul of man, are greater works

[1] Mark xvi. 17.

than physical miracles; and that these spiritual miracles do occur and have occurred in a continuous series, from the first day of our Lord's intercourse with His disciples till now, is a matter of unquestionable experience. Why should it be surprising that the material should so far give way to the spiritual that miracles of conversion and restoration, of penitence and pardon, should now be the mode of Christ's self-manifestation among us instead of the visible miracles which accompanied His visible Presence? 'Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to the Father[1]': surely He meant that their whole work was to be raised to the spiritual level when the visible companionship had given way to the spiritual indwelling, when the Ascension had been followed by the gift of the Holy Spirit perpetuating the Presence of their Lord with them. To such works, to the miracles of the Spirit we may confidently appeal when challenged to show that God is with us. 'He does nothing,' was the touching cry of the aged thinker[2], still retaining his grasp of the faith in a personal God whom he could very dimly see; 'He does nothing.' He knew but little of the inner heart

[1] John xiv. 12.

[2] Carlyle; *Froude's Life*, ii. 260.

of men who could say that: for thanks be to God we may still make the appeal which was made of old to the living Saviour 'who daily works so many works, drawing men to godliness, winning them to virtue, teaching them of immortality, revealing to them the Father, manifesting to each one Himself[1].' 'He who is dead does nothing[2]': but He who does such things is alive for evermore, and these are His miracles that are wrought amongst us.

And thus I am brought to the last question we shall have to consider. What then, I shall be asked, is your evidence, seeing you have excluded miracles and denied their evidential force? Before answering, I must observe that we have not excluded miracles, for they constitute an element in that revelation of God in Christ which is at once the object and the cause of our faith. But though we may thus point to this or that element on which faith is based, yet the question, What is the evidence of Christianity? is unanswerable: the evidence cannot be defined. It is at once the most simple and the most complex ground of conviction. Simple, because it is nothing more than belief in the Person of Christ: complex,

[1] Athan. *de Incarn.* 31. [2] Ibid.

because all personality is complex. Can any one set forth in a definite form his reasons for believing in the goodness of his friend, in the justice of his master or his judge, in the love of his mother? So it is with the Person of Christ, the beginning and the end, the cause and the object of our faith. In every estimate of action previous personal impression of character is involved. We witness the good deeds of one man with incurable distrust; however beneficent, we will not believe that they are proofs of goodness of character. But when another does what seems to be harmful or at least inexplicable, we are sure that it must somehow come under the general law of his goodness, and that it would witness to it if we knew all. So also it is the impression of personal character which is the fundamental evidence of Christianity. And this impression can only in the final resort be produced by personal experience. In the New Testament records of the spread of the faith we see the presence of a power which cannot be defined or explained: an influence carrying Christ into the hearts of men, a force of conviction truly miraculous, an influence, a force which can only be described as the direct action of the

Holy Spirit. That direct action of the Holy Spirit continues to our own day. We can indeed set forth the convergent proofs that make Christianity incomparably the most certain religion the world has ever known—the witness of prophecy, the witness of history, the claims of Christ in relation to His character, the belief of the Apostles in the Resurrection, the moral results of His teaching, the life that is in the world since His death—but one moment of personal knowledge and communion, one flash of experience of that spiritual power which takes of Christ and shows Him unto me outweighs them all. That, and no system of doctrines, is the true revelation of Christianity: that, and no external miraculous attestation, is the true evidence of it. The whole force of religion is the religion itself. The prophets proclaimed their message because it came to them as the Word of God, and they knew it, and sought for no signs to prove it; the disciples accepted the revelation of Christ because it was His who had 'the words of eternal life,' and whom they 'believed and had come to know' to be 'the Holy One of God[1]'; and therefore to all demands for systems of evidence, for a recur-

[1] John vi. 69 πεπιστεύκαμεν καὶ ἐγνώκαμεν.

rence of miraculous signs, for some overwhelming 'rational guarantee' of the truth, we, if we would follow their method, can but answer as St. Paul answered the Jews and the Greeks of his time. 'The Jews ask for signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumblingblock, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God[1].'

[1] 1 Cor. i. 22 ff.

From
Mr. Murray's List of Theological Works.

NEW WORKS BY THE REV. CHARLES GORE, D.D.

Just Published. Fifth Thousand.

An Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans. By the Rev. CHARLES GORE, M.A., D.D. Edin., Canon of Westminster, Honorary Chaplain to H.M. the Queen. Vol. I, Chaps. I–VIII. Crown 8vo, 3*s.* 6*d.*

UNIFORM WITH THE ABOVE.

Eighth Thousand.

An Exposition of the Epistle to the Ephesians. By the Rev. CHARLES GORE, M.A., D.D. Edin. Crown 8vo, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Twelfth Thousand.

The Sermon on the Mount. By the Rev. CHARLES GORE, M.A., D.D. Edin. Crown 8vo, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Crown 8vo, 6s.

Lux Mundi: A Series of Studies in the Religion of the Incarnation. By Various Writers. Edited by the Rev. CHARLES GORE, M.A., D.D. Edin.

Biographical and Miscellaneous Sermons. By BENJAMIN JOWETT, late Master of Balliol. Edited by the Hon. W. H. FREMANTLE, M.A., Dean of Ripon. Three Vols. crown 8vo, 7*s.* 6*d. each.*

DOCTRINAL SERMONS, in Preparation.

COLLEGE SERMONS, Third Edition, Published.

General Introduction to the Old Testament.

The Canon. By WILLIAM HENRY GREEN, D.D., LL.D., Professor of Oriental and Old Testament Literature in Princeton Theological Seminary. Crown 8vo, 7*s.* 6*d.*

LONDON: JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

A Memoir of Edward Meyrick Goulburn, D.D., late Dean of Norwich. By the Rev. BERDMORE COMPTON, Prebendary of St. Paul's Cathedral. With Portrait. Crown 8vo, 5*s.*

'A character of great beauty, which reveals itself not only in Mr. Berdmore Compton's pages, but in the delightful portrait prefixed to them.'—*Literature.*

The Lord's Prayer. By the late EDWARD MEYRICK GOULBURN, D.D., sometime Dean of Norwich, Author of 'Thoughts on Personal Religion,' &c. Crown 8vo, 6*s.*

'The work is so full, so rich in thought and learning, so unhurried, so calm and earnest at the same time. One revels in such a volume. It is entirely representative of the culture and piety of a typical Anglican divine. We have known nothing better on that most wonderful and beautiful prayer.'—*Literary World.*

The Prayer-Book and the Christian Life; or, Conception of the Christian Life implied in the Book of Common Prayer. By CHARLES T. TIFFANY, D.D., Archdeacon of New York. With an Introduction by the Right Rev. the LORD BISHOP OF ROCHESTER. Fcap. 8vo, 5*s.*

Benedicite: The Song of the Three Children. Illustrations of the Power, Beneficence, and Design Manifested by the Creator in His Works. By G. C. CHILD CHAPLIN, M.D. A New and Cheaper Impression. Crown 8vo, 3*s.* 6*d.*

Ministerial Priesthood. Six Chapters Preliminary to a Study of the Ordinal. With an Inquiry into the Truth of Christian Priesthood and an Appendix on the Recent Roman Controversy. By R. C. MOBERLY, D.D., Regius Professor of Pastoral Theology in the University of Oxford, Canon of Christ Church. *Second Impression.* 8vo, 14*s.*

'As one of the authors of "Lux Mundi," Canon Moberly's exposition is distinguished by the high qualities which have made the school to which the writer belongs so influential in the Church of England.'—*Manchester Guardian.*

Church Troubles and Common Sense. A Plea for Reason and Responsibility. By the Rev. WILLIAM H. CARNEGIE, M.A. (Oxon), Rector of Great Witley, Worcestershire, Author of "Some Principles of Religious Education." Crown 8vo, 2*s.* 6*d.*

'Mr. Carnegie's words are worth weighing.'—*Spectator.*

'His concluding words are what we say to our readers of the whole book—"We only ask for these facts a fair consideration."'—*Guardian.*

A Dictionary of Hymnology. Setting forth the Origin and History of the Hymns in the Principal Hymnals, with Notices of their Authors, &c. By the Rev. JOHN JULIAN, D.D. Medium 8vo, 42*s.*

LONDON: JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

Princeton Theological Seminary-Speer Library
1 1012 01100 1536

DATE DUE

DEMCO 38-297